THE PRACTICE OF SATIRE IN ENGLAND, 1650-1770

A Dissertation in

English

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation attempts to answer a central question: how was satire conceived and understood by writers and readers from 1650 to 1770? Much has been written about eighteenth-century satire, but scholars have focused almost exclusively on a very small number of canonical works (e.g., *Absalom and Achitophel*, *Gulliver’s Travels*, *The Dunciad*). They have also looked for continuity over time or have jumped casually from 1681 to 1704 to 1743 with little attention to the importance of chronology. This study is based on reading some 3,000 works, in all genres and all years, from one-page squibs to novels.

Chapter 1 offers a quantitative and conceptual analysis of the canon as presented in the books of twelve major predecessors. It also analyzes the prices charged for some 250 satires, considers the problem of definition of “satire,” and offers a rationale for a taxonomic approach. Chapter 2 is devoted to a survey of contemporary commentary—what eighteenth-century critics and practitioners of satire had to say about it. Contrary to the conclusions drawn by P. K. Elkin in *The Augustan Defence of Satire* (1973), I demonstrate that eighteenth-century attitudes toward satire are not neat and consistent. Chapters 3 through 7 offer a detailed taxonomic analysis of satire as it was written in five significantly different sub-periods. Chapter 3 deals with “Satire in the Carolean Period”; chapter 4 with “Satire at the End of the Seventeenth Century; chapter 5 with “Swift, Defoe, and the New Varieties of Satire, 1700-1725”; chapter 6 with “Harsh and Sympathetic Satire, 1725-1745”; chapter 7 with “Churchill, Foote, Macklin, Garrick, Smollett, Sterne, and Others: 1745-1770.” A brief Epilogue analyzes a spectrum of motives for writing satire.

English satire from 1650 to 1770 is messy, confused, and discontinuous; it comprises a staggering amount of disparate material; and it comes in all shapes and sizes. Satiric practice changes radically and rapidly (from decade to decade, sometimes more quickly) across this period. Reading everything, and paying attention to the particular contexts from which satires spring, dramatically changes how we understand satire in its great age.
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How was satire conceived by writers and readers in the years c. 1650-1770? My predecessors have contributed much to our understanding of individual authors and texts, but the many good studies in this realm have only limited utility as accounts of satire across a broad period or as explanations of the full spectrum of everything being written at any given time. Modern conclusions about eighteenth-century satire have been almost wholly derived from a small number of major canonical works. My object is not to quarrel with interpretations: critics have for the most part soundly explicated the satires they cover. They have not, however, described what I want to describe—the many and varied phenomena with which we need to deal if we are to understand satire in the long eighteenth century. In this study I will argue that, (a) that in excluding the hundreds upon hundreds of non-canonical satires from our accounts, we misrepresent the period, and (b) we must attend to correspondences but also to discontinuities in satiric practice, rather than emphasizing the former and downplaying the latter. Both the omission of a majority and the lumping together of the elite minority have damaging consequences. Scholars rightly proclaim that this is the great age of satire—and then overlook much of what makes it so spectacular.

Critics almost always take for granted that only big-name writers count in determining what satire meant in the long eighteenth century, a view unabashedly endorsed by David Worcester in 1940. Worcester claimed that theories of satire should derive from those texts that have “risen to the top,” and that the works below, “graduated from acidulous gruel to a thick sludge of hell-broth,” are useful only insofar as they contribute to our appreciation of their betters. Long influential modern satire studies and many recent ones share markedly narrow fields of vision, as a quick glance at tables of contents will show. Ian Jack (1952) deals with Butler, Dryden, Pope, and Johnson; Ronald Paulson (The Fictions of Satire, 1967) devotes most of his space to Dryden and Swift; Michael Seidel (1979) treats Marvell, Butler, Dryden, Swift, Pope, and Sterne; Dustin Griffin (1994) limits his discussion to works of “high culture,” and is heavy on Dryden, Swift, and Pope; and Fredric V. Bogel (2001) has chapters on Swift, Gay, and Fielding. The critical focus has been almost entirely devoted to those works that have stood the
test of time: *Mac Flecknoe, Absalom and Achitophel, Gulliver’s Travels*, Pope’s Horatian imitations, and a few other canonical masterpieces have formed the center of modern satire studies. These are great and important examples, but they are, finally, only examples—and, like any small sample drawn from a messy whole, they do not represent anything like a complete picture.

The problem is in part a matter of perspective. An Englishman asked to define satire in 1725 would be as likely to cite the torrents of anonymous squibs—the satiric output of hack writers either never identified or now entirely forgotten—as the high-minded *tours de force* so often applauded and anthologized in later centuries. The assumption now seems to be that the canonical works were widely circulated and much admired. Whether they were in fact more visible and influential than the satires purged from our accounts, however, is a question worth considering. At the very least, the now-canonical masterworks would have been read, measured, and understood alongside everything else, and contemporary readers would not have excluded the scraps in formulating their conceptions of satire. A reader in 1725 asked about influential satirists would be as likely to name Ned Ward as Alexander Pope, but satire studies are likely to ignore the existence of Ward and his kind altogether. This disparity is substantial, and its implications are significant.

My point is not to challenge the superiority of *The Dunciad* to Ward’s *The Quack Vintners*, but to suggest that the canon does not tell us how to read the period properly. We need to attend to both major and minor works, and to realize that the authors absent from modern accounts—the writers whose practices are not accommodated by twentieth-century theories—are not merely unknowns. Daniel Defoe was among the most prolific and most famous satirists of the first quarter of the eighteenth century, but satire studies mention him *en passant* if at all. The omission of a major canonical author suggests a considerable problem with the way this period has been characterized. My goal is a serious reconstruction of satire as it was understood by contemporaries, which means challenging both the retrospective elevation of a small number of satires and the subsequent exclusion of the rest.

My approach is therefore inclusive rather than exclusive, tending toward many examples rather than detailed analyses of a few. Necessarily, I will treat a number of very minor, often anonymous texts.
Though literary critics have not read and would never want to read many of these works, I discuss them because they were produced alongside the canonical masterpieces, and because I see no evidence that their original readers would have concurred in our evaluative system. Pope and Swift did become famous, and *The Dunciad* and *Gulliver’s Travels* were definitely sensations, but that any of our favored “Augustans” was widely appreciated as the dominant satirist of his moment I am inclined to doubt. I make no apology for including the “thick sludge of hell-broth,” or for refusing to privilege the superior examples in whose shadows the scum exists. For the headliners there has been adulation and explication aplenty, and while I agree that the great works are very great, my object is not to pay homage to that greatness.

The most celebrated satires of this period have been treated in almost total isolation from their contexts—and they have also been understood as related enterprises, examples of what is still too often termed “Augustan satire.” To date no one has sufficiently grappled with the heterogeneity of satiric practice in the long eighteenth century, even among the luminaries most extensively studied. Dryden, Swift, Pope, Gay, and Fielding are the premier “Augustans,” and they are almost always grouped together, but they have fundamentally different satiric practices and purposes. *The Rape of the Lock* is just not doing what *Absalom and Achitophel* or *Mac Flecknoe* had done; Fielding’s oft-cited tolerance resembles Swift’s rage not a whit; the Dean’s propagandistic works are a world away from Pope’s Moral Essays; and both *Gulliver’s Travels* and *The Beggar’s Opera* are one-offs that have little satiric commonality with anything else produced in this century. Literary critics tend to look for categories and continuity, but very little about satire in the period at issue here is tidy or straightforward.

What changes, if anything, in the writing and reading of satire across the long eighteenth century? Among modern scholars, the two prevailing assumptions are of underlying unity or of organic development, though neither model accords well with the evidence. I have organized my study chronologically, and what I aim to demonstrate is the presence of much diversity not reducible to a simple trajectory. Such a survey is meant to challenge those critics who identify a clear evolution in satire throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as well as those who ignore the historical contexts of
these satires altogether. Perhaps more than any other type of writing, satire is crucially dependent upon its immediate extrinsic circumstances. One of the points to which I will frequently return is the vital significance of chronology. Satiric practice changes several times over the course of this period, and these shifts are non-evolutionary, unpredictable, and (depending on the instance) somewhere between partially and totally inexplicable. Transformations in satiric practice are messy but undeniable, and to ignore or over-simplify them is to miss much of what makes eighteenth-century satire so remarkable a phenomenon.

My principle of inclusiveness requires me to say something about what I mean by a “satire,” a point taken up in some detail in chapter 1. I have included in this study those works that have been long treated as satirical or partly satirical, as well as those that were originally identified as satires by their authors. Many of the latter do not conform very well to present-day definitions of satire. A surprising number of the early eighteenth-century squibs called “satyrs,” for instance, do not seem either funny or witty in the way we expect satire to be. My solution to this incompatibility is not to delete the misfits, but to reject imposition of all absolutes in the realm of definition. The characteristics that critics now commonly assume to be inherent in satire are not always to be found even in author-labeled satires. The “satiric frame of mind” described by Charles Knight, like “the satirist” envisioned by Leonard Feinberg, does not seem self-evidently applicable to all, or even to the majority, of the satirists in this period. A seventeenth- or eighteenth-century reader asked to explain the currently prevailing “satiric frame of mind” could only be baffled. He certainly could not describe his satiric milieu in a single set of terms: “satire” clearly meant many things for eighteenth-century writers and readers, and demanding clear-cut boundaries and an absolute definition is therefore a delusive venture.

I recognize that in eschewing the burden of tidy explanation, I run the risk of cutting down the forest without planting any trees of my own. I do not claim, however, to provide a theory of satire, though my survey has positive implications for satiric theory. My purpose is rather to provide an accurate taxonomic description of satiric practices in England in the period surveyed here. To this end, I believe that the primary texts need to be allowed to dictate the shape and conclusions of the study. By no means
am I trying to avoid blunt conclusions. This study offers plenty of them, but they are different in kind from those found in previous accounts of eighteenth-century satire. A theory of satire is only valuable if it can help us read the satires it purports to explain, and extant theories offer little such help for the bulk of texts written in this period—how could they? Any attempt to find unity in a voluminous and unwieldy body of material produced over more than a century by hundreds of writers in a variety of forms is doomed from the start. I realize that looking at vast quantities of non-canonical satire is not in itself an exciting prospect. For my part, I will say that reading the hundreds of examples of Worcester’s “hell-broth” turned out to be less tedious and a great deal more fun than anticipated. Some of these satires are admittedly pretty awful, but many are not, and the picture that emerges from looking at the whole lot of them is astonishingly unlike what critics of “Augustan satire” describe. Carrying out this survey surprised me. I did not read the primary material with any expectations about the particular conclusions it would generate, but if I had tried to guess I could only have guessed very wrong. The culture of satire was far messier and more exciting than our representations of it would lead one to believe, and contemporary writers and readers would have had a much different sense of what satire is than what one finds in modern accounts of “satire.” For writers and readers of the long eighteenth century, satire was energetic, often outrageous, confusing, and wildly varied. My aim is to recreate the sense of chaotic but vibrant diversity that the original audiences enjoyed.
A NOTE ON TEXTS, DATES, AND CURRENCY

My primary material comes from a variety of sources. A high proportion is first editions obtained electronically via *Early English Books Online* (EEBO) or *Eighteenth-Century Collections Online* (ECCO). The place of publication of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century texts is London, unless otherwise specified. Where good modern scholarly editions exist, I have used them (e.g., the “California” Dryden; the Oxford editions of Butler, Buckingham, Southerne, Fielding, Churchill, and others; the Twickenham Pope; the Harold Williams edition of Swift’s poetry). When I quote from a manuscript or a modern edition I say so. Many poems from the period 1660-1714 are quoted from John Harold Wilson’s *Court Satires of the Restoration* or the seven-volume “Yale” *Poems on Affairs of State*. Titles are given verbatim in whatever form my source renders them, which produces occasional oddities (e.g., *The Beaux Stratagem* without an apostrophe, *The Wives’ Excuse* with an editorially-added apostrophe).

Unless otherwise stated, dates are for the first printed edition of non-dramatic satires. Where there is a significant gap between composition and publication, I give both dates if known. For plays, I give the date of first performance. If I quote from the printed edition, and the publication date is not the same year as initial performance, I give both; if I am not citing the text, I only include publication date if it is more than two years later.

Because I have systematically paid attention to the cost of buying satires, many prices are cited. For the benefit of those unfamiliar with Britain’s pre-1971 non-decimal currency, let me note that there were 12 pennies (d) to the shilling (s) and 20 shillings to the pound (£). A 1d broadside therefore cost just one-twelfth (8.33%) of the price of a 1s play. There is no valid way of providing a single multiplier that gives a present-day buying power equivalent for an eighteenth-century price. Readers should be aware, however, that a 5s novel sounds cheap but was actually far from affordable. As I explain in chapter 1, applying a multiplier anywhere from 200 to 300 times the late seventeenth- or early eighteenth-century price yields a reasonable approximation of present-day value. On this basis, a 5s novel may be calculated as costing £50-75 in our terms—or at the summer 2008 rate of exchange, roughly $100-150.
## WORKS FREQUENTLY CITED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Edition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
PRICE SYMBOL KEY

The following symbols indicate the source from which I have derived the prices of satires where known.

Readers should note that Luttrell did not always pay list price.

* = Luttrell
† = advertisement
‡ = Term Catalogues
no symbol = price from title page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A number of people have assisted me in this project. John Harwood has been helpful at all stages—always interested, always encouraging, and always prepared to ask hard questions and offer a perspective that is uniquely his. Laura Knoppers and Philip Jenkins have been unfailingly supportive but rigorous in their readings. Tom Minsker, characteristically indispensable, devoted much time and energy to solving formatting problems that would in his absence have defeated me. I am grateful to Bill Brockman and the Pennsylvania State University library for acquiring books, microfilm collections, and databases that made this project possible. The project was completed with the assistance of an ACLS/Mellon Dissertation Fellowship that gave me invaluable time and extremely helpful research money. I hope the book that will eventually result will justify their confidence in me and in my project.

My principal debt is to my supervisor, Robert D. Hume, who discussed all possibilities and problems from the inception of the idea for the thesis and read draft after draft in the course of its writing and revision.

I also owe a considerable debt of gratitude to Thomas Lockwood (University of Washington) and Howard D. Weinbrot (University of Wisconsin), outside readers on my dissertation committee who went far beyond any reasonable obligation of any reader in the care with which they read every page and in generously encouraging me while challenging me to meet objections and make improvements. Both of them came to State College at considerable inconvenience to participate in the defense, and I shall always treasure the memory of that occasion and the spirited, helpful, provocative conversations that followed it.
Chapter 1
Canonical and Non-Canonical Satire, 1650-1770

Eighteenth-century satire has received quite a lot of critical attention—but exactly what is meant by “eighteenth-century satire”? When scholars discuss satire in its great age, they almost invariably have in mind Mac Flecknoe and Absalom and Achitophel, Gulliver’s Travels, The Dunciad, Pope’s Moral Essays, and a short list of other much-celebrated works. The brilliance of these satires is not in doubt, and much of the criticism devoted to studying them has been of very high quality—but the most admired works of the preeminent satirists have been all but entirely removed from their original contexts. Few scholars would deny radical selectivity: satire is understood as a literary venture, and its students have cheerfully cherry-picked the best examples and ignored the rest. Whether this approach yields an accurate picture of eighteenth-century satire is a question that has never been raised.

One object of the present study is to resituate canonical satires amid the hundreds upon hundreds of other works that represent the contexts in which they were originally written and read. People who look at tips of icebergs do not tend to apprehend what is really there: in plucking a few largely atypical works from a vast and wildly heterogeneous pool, scholars have distorted the culture of satire and obscured much of what makes it so exciting. Proofs are in puddings, and the utility of a broader investigation will have to be demonstrated by the survey chapters. My objectives in the first three sections of this chapter are: (1) to make explicit the canon used by modern scholars, the evidentiary basis on which our conclusions have rested; (2) to give some indication of the magnitude and diversity of the relevant primary material with which I mean to deal in this study; and (3) to investigate the format and price of satire as it circulated in this period, in order to call attention to the implications of material contexts for dissemination and imagined audience. The point, most broadly, is to make clear just how little we have seen and understood of what turns out to be a massive and variegated body of writing. In the last two sections, I will confront the vexed issue of definition, arguing for the limitations of definition
in dealing with satire and for the utility of a taxonomic approach to this material. I will also explain my rationale for including more than formal verse satires and some of Swift’s prose.

I. The modern critical canon and its implications

Eighteenth-century satire has had much critical attention, and most of the major set pieces have been well enough understood, but the field of vision has been narrow, both in scope and concept. This section is devoted to a largely quantitative analysis of the canon used by satire scholars. I grant that these critics do not claim to be covering a high percentage of satires, but we need to realize just how few works have contributed significantly to our sense of satire in this period. The question is not “have scholars been selective?”—of course they have—but, “how selective?” and “is selectivity a problem?”

Before I get to the business of bemoaning my predecessors’ failure to be inclusive, I ought to say that inclusivity of the sort I am attempting here would have been nearly impossible only a few years ago. The smallness of the canon owes something to critical prejudice, but it also stems from real difficulties in finding and reading the many non-canonical works. Someone writing a generation or even a decade ago could have spent massive amounts of time trying to turn up printed texts in libraries without ever finding all of the sources that a scholar today can obtain in an evening on Early English Books Online and Eighteenth-Century Collections Online. EEBO and ECCO, as well as the English Short Title Catalogue and other resources, have revolutionized potentialities for research in this period. We now have the means to find and read virtually all satires printed in the long eighteenth century, and the purpose of this study is to use them. Access opens up a new world—though the fact that the Yale POAS (on shelves for upwards of thirty years now) has figured so little in satire studies suggests that difficulty of access is not the only problem. Of that, more in due course.

What is the extent and nature of the modern critical canon? Magnitude first: on what foundation have conclusions about satire been based? This is not a subjective question; we can quantify citations in illustrative if imperfect ways. Although I refer to various critics and studies throughout this study, my statistics in this section are derived from twelve accounts written by ten satire scholars. David
Worcester’s *The Art of Satire* (1940) was the first general satire book to be taken at all seriously, so I begin with him. I also include James Sutherland’s *English Satire* and Alvin B. Kernan’s *The Plot of Satire*, whose focuses—like *The Art of Satire*—are not exclusively eighteenth century, but which draw heavily on examples from this period and have been influential on successive generations of eighteenth-century satire scholars. The list includes particularly important books, especially those by Ronald Paulson, Claude Rawson, and Dustin Griffin, and representatives from each decade following Worcester. These studies are not equally significant, and others could be used, but adding or substituting different books would not meaningfully alter the statistical tendencies I aim to highlight here. Not part of this list are some excellent accounts of specific types of satire or sub-periods within the century—for example, Thomas Lockwood’s *Post-Augustan Satire* (1979), Vincent Carretta’s *The Snarling Muse* (1983) and *George III and the Satirists from Hogarth to Byron* (1990), Harold Love’s *English Clandestine Satire 1660-1702* (2004), and Howard D. Weinbrot’s *Menippean Satire Reconsidered* (2005). Neither do I include single-author studies like Maynard Mack on Pope or Irvin Ehrenpreis on Swift, which of course include a wider array of works but which do not claim to offer conclusions about “eighteenth-century satire.”

A word about the citation statistics in Table 1.1 and how they were generated. I distinguish between (a) works mentioned only once and strictly *en passant*, (b) works referred to in passing on more than one occasion, (c) works given short analysis (anywhere from half a page to a few pages), and (d) works given more substantial time and attention (a lengthy section or chapter). Obviously this is not a perfect system—where is the line between “short” and “substantial”?—but I have tried to be fair and consistent. I do not include texts referred to as contrastive examples to satire or as otherwise non-satiric. I count the original *Poems on Affairs of State* as a single work when it is cited that way; the same is true of Marvell’s “Painter” poems and Young’s *Love of Fame* satires. I also treat the various *Dunciads* together. I count both the Moral Essays and Horatian imitations as single works; the *Epistle to Arbuthnot* and the *Epilogue to the Satires* are counted separately. To reiterate an important point: few of these critics profess to be dealing with a lot of satires and authors, and I am not so unsporting as to conclude in
triumph that my predecessors did not manage to do what they did not attempt. But we do need to understand a quantitative fact: much-repeated conclusions about what “satire” is and does in the eighteenth century have been drawn on the basis of a scant body of material.

**Table 1.1.** Citation Counts for Twelve General Satire Books.

Number of works (a) cited once, (b) cited more than once, (c) briefly discussed (anything from half a page to a short section), and (d) analyzed at length (a long section or chapter).\(^1\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th># of works mentioned once</th>
<th>more than one mention</th>
<th>short analysis</th>
<th>major discussion</th>
<th>total</th>
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<tr>
<td>Worcester, <em>Art of Satire</em> (1940)</td>
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<td>Jack, <em>Augustan Satire</em> (1952)</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>Paulson, <em>The Fictions of Satire</em> (1967)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50(^3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michael Seidel, <em>The Satiric Inheritance</em> (1979)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rawson, <em>Order from Confusion Sprung</em> (1985)(^3)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rawson, <em>Satire and Sentiment</em> (1994)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^1\) This number does not include works that are cited in footnotes and endnotes but not in the main text. Those numbers are usually fairly small: Worcester (4); Sutherland (4); Kernan (3); Paulson (5 each for *Fictions and Satire and the Novel*); Seidel (5); Rawson (*Order, 4; Satire and Sentiment, 5*); and Bogel (3). The figures for Jack (10) and Griffin (16) are slightly higher, and the Blooms refer to an additional 46 works in their notes.

\(^2\) Of the 50 total works mentioned or discussed at length in this book, 22 are Swift’s.

\(^3\) *Order from Confusion Sprung* is not only a satire book, and accordingly I have derived my statistics from Parts I and II (through p. 258). Parts III (“Fielding”) and IV (“Others”) are not specifically focused on satire.
The table gives us figures on a study-by-study basis. The average number of eighteenth-century works referred to as satires, whether once or multiple times, is roughly 30 (totaling columns 1 and 2); the average number of works discussed, whether very briefly or at considerable length, is just 16 (totaling columns 3 and 4). Omitting Paulson’s *Satire and the Novel* and the Blooms’ book would reduce the average total to just 12 satires actually discussed. The two most recent studies, Griffin’s and Bogel’s, mention 48 and 30 eighteenth-century satires respectively; in both cases, more than half of those are just passing references. More telling are the results if we calculate citation statistics for the total canon, drawing on all twelve of these books.

Only 93 works have been mentioned in more than one of these accounts. The numbers are low, but the pool is not only small—it is also highly selective. The most conspicuous form of selectivity is in the realm of author coverage. The average number of writers mentioned in these studies is 18 (counting *POAS* and *Craftsman* as single authors). Worcester refers to 24 satirists; Jack to 17; Sutherland to 24; Kernan to 9; Paulson to 17 (*Fictions*) and 22 (*Satire and the Novel*); the Blooms to 35; Seidel to only 8; Rawson to 10 (*Order*) and 15 (*Satire and Sentiment*); Griffin to 23; and Bogel to just 6. Of the 93 works alluded to by more than one critic, 28 are Swift’s, 10 are Pope’s (including *Peri Bathous* and *Memoirs of Scriblerus*), and 6 are Dryden’s. Ten are Fielding’s, four are Johnson’s, and Gay and Smollett each contribute three to the count. (Only one of the 93 works is by a female writer—Rawson cites Sarah Fielding’s *David Simple* in both of his studies.) The math is striking: of the 93 works discussed in multiple satire studies, 41 (44%) are by the major “Scriblerian” trio, Pope, Swift, and Gay; 44 (47%) are by the “Augustan” heavyweights, Dryden, Swift, and Pope. Dryden, Swift, Pope, and Fielding account for 54 of the works (59%). Adding Gay, Johnson, and Smollett, the group makes for 64 of the works (69%). Broadly speaking, what this means is that close to half of the satires mentioned in more than one of these studies are by just three writers. Hard to imagine how the picture of satire as practiced over a period of more than a century could be anything like complete—or the representation anything like fair—when roughly 70% of the primary material studied was produced by seven writers.
Not all genres fare equally well. That verse satire dominates the list is not surprising; 48 of the 93 works cited by more than one critic are poems (that is, more than half). Prose satire is a broad category, including anything from *The Rehearsal Transpros’d* to *Peri Bathous* to *Tristram Shandy*, and it also receives relatively substantial coverage: 29 of the works fall under this heading, including 11 by Swift, four by Fielding, and three by Smollett. Five satirical or sometimes-satirical journals are cited. The generic loser on the list is drama: only 11 dramatic satires are referred to by more than one scholar, and four of those are Fielding’s. Other notables are entirely unrepresented. None of Dryden’s plays is cited, and neither is anything by Shadwell, Lee, Southerne, Macklin, or Foote. The point bears repeating: not one of these accounts of satire in the long eighteenth century so much as mentions a single play by Dryden. I grant that adding *The Kind Keeper* and *Amphitryon* might not significantly alter our theories, but unfortunately the problem is much bigger than a particular work or set of works.

Vast amounts of satiric material have been expunged from our literary history. Let us take, for example, the 1690s, a decade little admired by satire scholars. I have read some 160 datable satires first published or apparently composed in this decade. This total includes such obvious items as Dryden’s translation of Juvenal and Persius (1693) and Garth’s *Dispensary* (1699). It also includes a flock of plays: the anonymous *The Female Wits* (satirizing Delarivier Manley and others); Southerne’s *The Wives’ Excuse* and *The Maid’s Last Prayer*; Shadwell’s *The Scowrers*; Behn’s *The Widdow Ranter*; Dryden’s *Amphitryon*; Congreve’s *The Old Batchelour, The Double-Dealer*, and *Love for Love*; and Vanbrugh’s *The Relapse* and *The Provok’d Wife*. Miscellaneous items include Tutchin’s *The Tribe of Levi*, Ward’s *The Poet’s Ramble after Riches* and the beginning of his *London Spy*, and Defoe’s *A New Discovery of an Old Intreague, An Encomium upon a Parliament*, and some early Swift. A large number of satires were being written and circulated. The first collection of *Poems on Affairs of State* appeared in 1689 and the last in 1716, printing hundreds of poems from the mid-seventeenth century to the time of publication. Massive though these volumes are, they contain nothing like all the poems now known to survive in

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4 The title page of this volume is dated 1693, but it actually appeared in October 1692.
manuscript. William J. Cameron informs us that more than 500 topical verse satires on state affairs have survived from the period 1688 to 1697 alone.\textsuperscript{5} The seven-volume twentieth-century collection of the same title represents only a small selection of what is to be found in the original \textit{POAS} volumes. A lot happened in satire in this decade, but the modern canon reflects almost none of this activity—the nineties being part of the black hole that separates \textit{Absalom and Achitophel} from \textit{A Tale of a Tub}.

Critical bias has dictated the canon and the terms on which it is studied. In 1940, Worcester genially pronounced the irrelevance of inferior samples. “In thinking of satire,” he ruled, “we should consider the hundreds of works that have risen to the top. The millions below . . . are interesting only insofar as they help to explain the principles of great satire.”\textsuperscript{6} Nothing else in later satire studies quite matches Worcester’s explicit endorsement of a purely evaluative system of selection, but other scholars have, at least implicitly, followed his lead. Jack observes that any study of a long period must either be “extremely general or extremely selective,” and he admits to being the latter: “since I wished to avoid byways and concentrate on the central poems of the period, several of the poems selected themselves.”\textsuperscript{7} (How one defines “centrality” he does not specify.) Kernan speaks of “great” satires, as does Paulson, whose interest lies in “the Augustan Age—the great age—of English satire.”\textsuperscript{8} Griffin explains his focus on his first page: “For reasons of space, I exclude satire in the novel. I confine myself to literary satire from ‘high culture’ and deliberately exclude nonliterary satire and satiric forms from popular culture.” When Bogel states that his study “focuses mostly on canonical texts by male authors,”\textsuperscript{9} we can guess to which writers he is referring. That the canonical works of Dryden, Pope, Swift and a few others count, while the low-culture or non-literary dreck does not, is inherited wisdom.

\textsuperscript{5} Cameron, \textit{POAS-Y}, 5:xxvii.
\textsuperscript{9} Bogel, \textit{The Difference Satire Makes: Rhetoric and Reading from Jonson to Byron} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), viii.
Most literary critics would readily acknowledge that they discuss what is good and ignore what is less good—they would disagree with me only on the question of whether this selectivity represents a problem. Are the scores of non-canonical satires simply shoddy examples of a mode perfected by Dryden, Swift, and Pope? If so, then adding them to our field of vision only makes for thankless drudgery, an exercise in wading through muck to find what we already knew existed. Another way of asking the question: can the major writers tell us how to read the period? Some critics seem to assume so.

In the satire chapter of *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature 1650-1740*, Michael Seidel “proves” a series of claims about satire by stating each of his points and asserting its application to Dryden, Pope, and Swift.\(^9\) Obviously we need to ask how well these conclusions hold up if we extend our test sample beyond those three writers.

The truth is that the canonical masterpieces are not representative of satiric practice in this period. J. Paul Hunter is among a small number of critics who observe the rich messiness of writing, but he too has a hard time taking unmentionables seriously. In his discussion of poetry in the long eighteenth century, he points out that others (beyond Dryden and Pope) were writing, others to whom posterity has been unkind. At the last, however, he concludes that, “Pope from his youth set the tone for virtually everything that happened in poetry,” and that—in the case of Dryden, then Pope, and yet later Johnson—“a single figure tended to dominate, indeed virtually rule, the world of writing” in their respective periods.\(^11\) Pope was undoubtedly important, but that he or any of his counterparts “set the tone” for his age is a claim not supported by the evidence. Many of Pope’s contemporaries feared or resented him, and others were prepared to be obsequious; he certainly had a reputation, as well as an indisputable influence on later eighteenth-century poets. That his work is characteristic of satiric practice in the first half of the eighteenth century, however, is just not true. Appreciating this fact depends on *what* we read, and also on *how* we read it. A skillful Eng. lit. type can readily find in the welter of primary material whatever he or

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\(^11\) Hunter, “Political, satirical, didactic and lyric poetry,” 204.
she is looking for: I can make these satires fit into a “Dryden” category, a “Swift” category, etc., with some tactical omissions and sufficient spin. But if we come at these sources without foregone conclusions, we find that in excluding the majority of satires we are losing more than bulk. The works of Arthur Maynwaring, Robert Dodsley, David Garrick and the many, many other satirists are not second-rate exemplars of what is now thought of as “Augustan” satire—they represent fundamentally different enterprises from each other and from the kind of satire described by modern critics. This is a book about making distinctions—and if as late as 2003 Paulson can casually equate “Popean” with “Swiftean” satire, then these distinctions need to be made.\footnote{12 Paulson, \textit{Hogarth’s Harlot: Sacred Parody in Enlightenment England} (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 68.}

Satire scholars have singled out the great works and then promptly forgotten that much has been erased, and if anything that represents a problem greater than selectivity. We believe that what we are discussing is in fact all there is, and that conviction leads us to assume that the works in our canon are somehow connected, vital links in an evolutionary chain. Literary critics are often of a mind to sort everything into a few categories, to demonstrate shared concept, to describe a “mode.” In the literary history of satire, Swift and Pope follow Dryden, Fielding and Johnson and Sterne follow Pope and Swift. Lumping \textit{Absalom and Achitophel} with \textit{A Tale of a Tub} under the heading of “Augustan” satire takes both works out of their original contexts and, considerably different though they are in almost every respect, invites us to find commonalities that we may be all too inclined to exaggerate. The connection from Dryden to Swift is cloudy, dubious, and insubstantial; the spate of Carolean clandestine satires have little to do with what happens after 1700; the assumption that Pope and Swift are twin satirists is a falsification; the relationship of satire in the 1710s to that of the 1730s is limited. \textit{Absalom and Achitophel}, the \textit{Tale}, \textit{The Dunciad}, and the other much-studied works need to be understood as chronologically remote examples of a widely practiced and multifarious form. One of the principal conclusions of this book is that the assumed interconnectedness of the Great Satires is purely an \textit{ex post facto} critical construct—and not a useful one.
Radical contextual oversimplification has produced a set of generalizations which we now have the resources to test with relative ease. Reading more satires changes things. I am not suggesting that we replace Swift and Pope on our undergraduate syllabi with Ned Ward and Robert Gould, and neither do I wish to demean the canonical works. In my opinion *Absalom and Achitophel* is one of the most brilliant satiric poems in the language, and Swift and Sterne are inspired singularities the likes of which we may never see again. I can well understand the impulse to highlight the masterpieces and filter out the rest—but in this case exercising quality control does nothing but vitiate the culture we mean to describe. What makes this the Age of Satire is not (or not primarily) the literary value of a dozen *tours de force*, but the diversity of satiric possibilities and practices. Different writers use satire differently for different audiences and with different objects in mind. If we look at the totality of what was regarded as satire by authors and readers, then we start to realize just how procrustean our accounts of eighteenth-century satire have been. Order-imposing assessments of a select canon have produced a dire misrepresentation of literary history: what actually exists is much messier, much more densely populated, much less logical in its change over time, and spectacularly multifarious.

II. Satires produced in England, 1650-1770

If “satire” does not consist exclusively of a few texts by Dryden, Swift, Pope, and a small number of others, then what body of works must we try to reckon with? A hundred and twenty years is a long time, and in cultural, social, religious, political, and literary terms, we need to acknowledge much change and variety. My aim in this section is to convey the magnitude of the primary material that falls under the heading of Satire in England, 1650-1770. I will take up the problem of definition in due course, but at the moment I should explain how my primary source list was generated. I include any work: (1) labeled a “satire” by its author; (2) which we have cause to believe was understood by contemporaries as a satire; or, (3) which has been treated as satirical by modern critics. The resultant list is a long one, and while another scholar might quibble over the inclusion or exclusion of any particular satire, what cannot be contested is the enormity of the body of material with which we are dealing.
An astonishing amount of satire circulated in this period. Between 1689 and 1716, more than thirty collections of *State Poems* (or *POAS*) appeared—including more than 1,200 verse satires. At least another 2,500 exist only in manuscript form. I have looked at upwards of 3,000 satiric works from the long eighteenth century in verse, prose, dramatic, and visual forms—and, despite my best efforts, what I have managed to get my hands on does not represent anything like the totality of what circulated in the period. These works are many, and they come in all shapes and sizes. Written satire is found in anything from one-page, occasional squibs to 500-page novels. Year in and year out throughout the long eighteenth century, in addition to the reprinting of classical and continental texts, new satires appeared in England and many were reprinted (frequently only once, some a few times, others more often and over longer periods). A considerable number of satires do not seem especially “literary.” Many of them are ephemeral, short, and cheap. Early in the period, many circulated in manuscript form, and only a small percentage of printed satires named an author on the title page. Subjects and targets are all over the map: satirists write on succession, revolution, and monarchy; on wine and brandy; on bad writers and on bad ministers of state; on marriage and on satirists of marriage. Some works appear in neatly bound editions, handsomely presented and confidently attributed; a considerable number are broadsides *sans* publication information or date. In tone, format, and subject matter, virtually anything goes. We can find satirical ballads, lampoons, formal verse satires, narrative satire of various sorts, mock-epics and burlesque satires, lightweight to severe dramatic satire, sermons, ballad operas, farce, satirical polemics, mock-journalism, essays on satire, cartoons and caricatures, and just about any other type of writing or visual representation. Cameron adds other forms, such as “the hue-and-cry advertisement, the litany, the song, the parliamentary speech, the epitaph, the epistle, the dramatic monologue or dialogue, the prologue or epilogue, the ‘Ghost’ scene, the petition or address, the character, the elegy, the prophecy, even that ‘anti-satiric’ form, panegyric.” Satire shows up everywhere, and it follows no very rigid generic principles.

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14 Cameron, *POAS-Y*, 5:xxxviii.
We need to have a sense of scope. One way of getting that is to look at the quantity and diversity of what happens in a single year, and any year will make the point. Different years reflect different patterns—the range in satiric types and targets is not the same in (say) 1660, 1715, and 1770—but at no time is there homogeneity or inactivity. One of the themes of this book is that looking only at canonical masterpieces gives us an incomplete picture of what goes on at any given moment, so I will use as my sample a year in which a major work is published. *Absalom and Achitophel* appears in 1681, making that a red-letter year from the vantage point of twentieth-century satire critics—but it is only one of many 1681 satires, and hardly a representative one. Table 1.2 is a list of satires associated with 1681, by which I mean satires published, performed, or apparently first circulating in manuscript in that year. Dating manuscript satires is obviously a thorny business, and no doubt many works were circulating in 1681 that cannot be dated with any certainty. I include only the ones for which, whether on the basis of internal or external evidence, we have some confidence about date.

**Table 1.2.** Satires Written or Published in 1681.

Listed alphabetically by author when known, and alphabetically by title where authorship is unknown.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>pub or MS</th>
<th>length</th>
<th>genre</th>
<th>characterization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Ayloffe</td>
<td><em>Oceana and Britannia</em></td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>201 lines</td>
<td>allegorical poem</td>
<td>high-heat execration of Charles II and monarchy; pro-republican</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aphra Behn</td>
<td><em>The Roundheads</em></td>
<td>perf.1681; pub. 1682</td>
<td>58pp.</td>
<td>parallel play</td>
<td>associates Whigs with Cromwell and civil war radicals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Care</td>
<td><em>Towser the Second a Bull-Dog. Or a short reply to Absalom and Achitophel</em></td>
<td>pub</td>
<td>2pp.</td>
<td>personal lampoon</td>
<td>bilious Whig attack on L'Estrange and Dryden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen College</td>
<td><em>Raree Show</em></td>
<td>pub</td>
<td>2-page broadside</td>
<td>ballad</td>
<td>violent libel against the government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td><em>A Satyr against Injustice, or, Scroggs upon Scroggs</em></td>
<td>pub</td>
<td>48-line broadside</td>
<td>high-heat lampoon</td>
<td>one of several of College's libels on Lord Chief Justice Scroggs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Sackville, Earl of Dorset</td>
<td><em>My Opinion</em></td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>20 lines</td>
<td>lively poetic squib</td>
<td>attacks both Monmouth and Duke of York; (sort of) pro-Whig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Dryden</td>
<td><em>Absalom and Achitophel</em></td>
<td>pub</td>
<td>38pp.</td>
<td>verse biblical allegory</td>
<td>attack on Whigs and defense of King</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dryden</td>
<td><em>The Spanish Fryar</em></td>
<td>pub</td>
<td>94pp.</td>
<td>split-plot tragicomedy</td>
<td>ridicules Priest; offers implicit political message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>pub or MS</td>
<td>length</td>
<td>genre</td>
<td>characterization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thomas Durfey</td>
<td>The Progress of Honesty</td>
<td>pub</td>
<td>23pp.</td>
<td>narrative</td>
<td>Tory prevails over Whig with caricatures of Shadwell and Shaftesbury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durfey</td>
<td>Sir Barnaby Whigg</td>
<td>Pub</td>
<td>63pp.</td>
<td>intrigue comedy</td>
<td>topical political commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Marvell</td>
<td>Flecknoe, an English Priest at Rome</td>
<td>wr.1646?; pub. 1681</td>
<td>170 lines</td>
<td>defamatory poem</td>
<td>personal attack with religio-political point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marvell</td>
<td>The Character of Holland</td>
<td>wr. 1653; pub. 1681</td>
<td>152 lines</td>
<td>harsh satiric poem</td>
<td>politically motivated attack on the Dutch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Mordaunt, Earl of Monmouth</td>
<td>The Ladies’ March</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>97 lines</td>
<td>“procession” lampoon</td>
<td>ridicules 23 court ladies but with little real animosity; bawdy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander Radcliffe</td>
<td>The Lawyers’ Demurrer Argued</td>
<td>Pub</td>
<td>72-line broadside</td>
<td>ballad</td>
<td>anti-Whig expression of loyalty to the King; lighthearted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward Ravenscroft</td>
<td>The London Cuckolds</td>
<td>perf.; Pub. 1683</td>
<td>63pp.</td>
<td>sex farce</td>
<td>ridicules cits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wentworth Dillon, Earl of Roscommon</td>
<td>The Ghost of the Old House of Commons</td>
<td>pub</td>
<td>65-line broadside</td>
<td>“ghost”-scene poem</td>
<td>high-heat warning to King; detraction of Whigs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anon.</td>
<td>Advice to the Painter . . . for Limning to the Life the Witnesses Against . . . Shaftesbury</td>
<td>pub</td>
<td>112-line broadside</td>
<td>“advice to the painter” poem</td>
<td>topical attack on Irish witnesses against Shaftesbury; pro-Whig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anon.</td>
<td>A Canto on the New Miracle Wrought by the Duke of Monmouth</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>83 lines</td>
<td>lampoon</td>
<td>bawdy Tory derision of Monmouth; low heat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anon.</td>
<td>The Club of Royalists</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>44 lines</td>
<td>defamatory poem</td>
<td>Tory attack on (named) Whigs; relatively mild</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anon.</td>
<td>An Essay of Scandal</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>84 lines</td>
<td>lampoon/ advice poem</td>
<td>obscene attack on court ladies and King’s whoremongering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anon.</td>
<td>Grimalkin, or, the Rebel Cat: A Novel</td>
<td>pub</td>
<td>13pp.</td>
<td>beast fable in prose</td>
<td>attacks Shaftesbury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anon.</td>
<td>An Heroic Poem 1681</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>140 lines</td>
<td>verse invective/ libel</td>
<td>spiteful personal attack on Whig politicians; scatological</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anon.</td>
<td>A New Ballad of London’s Loyalty</td>
<td>pub</td>
<td>48-line broadside</td>
<td>ballad</td>
<td>stinging attack on (named) City Whigs; calls for loyalty to the King</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anon.</td>
<td>The Oxford Vision. April 1681</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>37 lines</td>
<td>political “vision” poem</td>
<td>topical swipe at Irish informer against the Whigs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anon.</td>
<td>A Panegyric</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>85 lines</td>
<td>personal lampoon</td>
<td>bawdy political attack on Nell Gwyn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anon.</td>
<td>A Panegyric On the Author of Absolom and Achitophel . . .</td>
<td>pub</td>
<td>98-line broadside</td>
<td>invective</td>
<td>attacks Dryden as a time-server; politically and personally motivated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anon.</td>
<td>The Parliament Dissolved at Oxford</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>36 lines</td>
<td>political libel</td>
<td>satire on Whigs in the Commons; defense of King</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anon.</td>
<td>Poor Robins Dream</td>
<td>pub</td>
<td>6pp.</td>
<td>dream vision</td>
<td>angry attack on Shaftesbury and Whig radicals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anon.</td>
<td>The Quarrel between Frank and Nan</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>171 lines</td>
<td>hudibrastics</td>
<td>indirect political commentary; topical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anon.</td>
<td>Sir John Berkenhead Reviv’d, or a Satyr</td>
<td>pub</td>
<td>37pp.</td>
<td>parallel history in verse</td>
<td>associates Whigs with civil war radicals; warns and defends Charles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>pub or MS</td>
<td>length</td>
<td>genre</td>
<td>characterization</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anon.</td>
<td>Against the late Rebellion</td>
<td>pub</td>
<td>36 lines</td>
<td>political poem</td>
<td>Whig defense of the House of Commons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anon.</td>
<td>The Tune to the Devonshire Cant: Or, an Answer to the Parliament Dissolved at Oxford</td>
<td>pub</td>
<td>100-line broadside</td>
<td>vision poem/libel</td>
<td>politicized Tory attack on Lord Howard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anon.</td>
<td>Utile Dulce</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>136 lines</td>
<td>shotgun libel</td>
<td>snarling attack on several named figures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anon.</td>
<td>A Vision in the Tower to the Lord Howard in His Contemplation</td>
<td>pub</td>
<td>155 lines</td>
<td>vision/advice poem</td>
<td>high anxiety; warns King against Whigs and Catholics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anon.</td>
<td>The Waking Vision; or, Reality in a Fancy</td>
<td>pub</td>
<td>72 lines</td>
<td>ironic elegy</td>
<td>bouncy, ironic derogation of the Whigs with a “Whig” speaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anon.</td>
<td>The Whiggs Lamentation For the Death of their Dear Brother Colledge, The Protestant Joyner</td>
<td>pub</td>
<td>136 lines</td>
<td>ironic elegy</td>
<td>bouncy, ironic derogation of the Whigs with a “Whig” speaker</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The point is not only volume but multiplicity. In some ways 1681 is an odd year, as many writers are worrying about the same set of issues. Satirist after satirist decries Shaftesbury and Monmouth or tries to associate the Whigs with the sectarians of the 1640s, and a sizeable portion of satire in the period 1679-81 reflects marked authorial anxiety. These works, that is, are mostly not just frivolous lampoonery or malicious defamation. 1681 was a critical year, and the crisis was very much on satirists’ minds. That said, the thirty-five satires listed here do reflect appreciable range. Stephen College scorches the government (at the cost of his life), as does Ayloffe; both are primarily offensive satirists, attacking the establishment and the status quo. Dryden’s sketches of Shaftesbury, Monmouth, Buckingham and others are stinging, but his purposes are as much defensive as antagonistic; he is championing the Stuart monarchy and the status quo. Behn and the author of Poor Robins Dream both connect contemporary Whigs with the civil war radicals, but Behn’s racy farce does not represent the same kind of satire as the latter’s desperately worried verse prophecy. Some of these works seem playful in their disparagement of targets (The London Cuckolds); some reflect aggravation or disapprobation (The Club of Royalists); some are ferociously denunciatory (Oceana and Britannia). They consist of straight invective or irony/indirection; targets can be standard butts (A Panegyric) or hated rivals (A New Ballad on London’s Loyalty). Satirists may either oppose or defend the status quo; they may revel in mockery (The Ladies’
March), but can also defame for the sake of purposive negative propaganda (The New Miracle). These works do not represent manifestations of a unified satiric “mode,” and neither are they typified in any way by Dryden’s masterful biblical allegory.

Other “big” years are just as untidy. Swift’s dizzying A Tale of a Tub appears in 1704. So does Maynwaring’s (?) An Address to Our Sovereign Lady, a libelous attack on the Tory Commons; it has quite a lot of bounce and a good deal of venom, reflecting its author’s bitter disenchantment. The anonymous Tryal of Skill is a universe apart from the fiery condemnation by Maynwaring and from Swift’s mad Tale—it is a non-serious, high-spirited “session of the poets” piece whose writer does not pretend that anything is at stake. The Devil Turn’d Limner is a mixture of prose and verse; the point of this politicized lampoon is to blast John Tutchin as a treacherous rogue. Nicholas Rowe’s only comedy, The Biter, targets not a particular person but a recognizable type; the generalized “O tempora” satire called A Hymn to Money proves entirely toothless. These satires look nothing like Swift’s Tale—how could they?—and they have little in common with each other. Writers like Maynwaring and Tom Brown pen religio-political invectives with conviction, whereas others are exuberantly general and untroubled by what they describe. Defoe’s The Address is the stuff of principled political commentary; the anonymous The Folly of Industry is clever for the sake of cleverness. The possibilities for and realities of satire—in 1681 and 1704, as throughout the long eighteenth century—were many.

Here are a few more examples of what I mean. Swift’s abusive lampoon on Lord Cutts (Description of a Salamander) appears in 1705; so do Defoe’s The Consolidator and Susanna Centlivre’s The Basset-Table, the first a 364-page fantasy-narrative attack on the High Church position, the latter a lightweight reform comedy. In the same year, the anonymous Korath: or the Danger of Schism pessimistically complains about the Whigs, Occasional Conformists, and Presbyterians, while the chauvinistic author of The D[utch] Deputies violently excoriates the Dutch and hopes for their destruction. What Swift’s invective, Defoe’s allegorical moon-voyage, and these other works have in common as satires is almost nothing. In 1706, Defoe publishes Jure Divino, a 12-book verse satire of 374 pages advocating contractual government and targeting proponents of divine right, and John Dunton
prints his *Whipping-Post: or, a Satyr upon Every Body*, an all-inclusive attack carried out on entirely personal grounds. Defoe’s densely argumentative piece of political theorizing is a drastically different sort of satiric venture from Dunton’s antagonistic lampooning of personal foes. *Gulliver’s Travels* appears in 1726, and critics celebrate that year as one of the landmark dates for Scriblerian satire. But another long, often reprinted prose satire of 1726 is remote in kind from the *Travels* and from whatever we mean by “Scriblerian”: Defoe’s *Political History of the Devil*, an extensive account of the devil’s influence on modern politics. Defoe’s tone may be “half-serious, half-bantering,” but his discussion of the supernatural, and of the reality of Satan in particular, is entirely literal, and the *History* is both entertaining and judgmental.\(^{15}\) In 1734, Pope’s *Sober Advice from Horace* is published; on stage appear both Henry Carey’s incomprehensible, nonsensical *The Tragedy of Chrononhotonthologos* and Gay’s *Distress’d Wife*, a cynical satiric comedy on London high life. Fielding is sour and shrill in *The Universal Gallant* (1735), and in the same year Robert Dodsley is lighthearted and affectionate in *The Toy-Shop*. In 1738, Johnson publishes *London*, Swift *Polite Conversation*, and Hogarth *Strolling Actresses in a Barn*. No one would argue that Dryden is like Behn or Ravenscroft, that Swift’s *Tale* represents the same kind of satiric venture as Rowe’s *The Biter*, or that Pope has much in common with Carey—but if we extract Dryden, Swift, and Pope from their contexts, then we tend to create the impression that, however much greater their works are, they somehow characterize the satiric practice of their moments.

What this amounts to is a fantastic mess—not a mode, or even two or three discrete modes, of “Augustan” satire. I will discuss these and other satires in the survey chapters; at the moment, I want only to insist on just how wide a spectrum of satiric practice exists in the eighteenth century. In any given decade or half-decade, common themes and targets are apparent; trends come and go; controversial satires generate responses; the popularity of a particular satire (e.g., *Hudibras* or *Gulliver’s Travels*) inspires imitations, allusions, or other forms of borrowing. Chapters 3 through 7 cover sub-periods in which we

find recognizable patterns and trends, but in each of those sub-periods and in the 120 years as a whole, we also discover considerable range. Satires can be seriously gloomy, solemn but not pessimistic, fundamentally jolly, or anything in between. The subject matter can be global (The Fatal Union of France and Spain) or local (A Satyr on Lincolnshire), issues of monumental importance to both author and nation (Absalom and Achitophel) or matters purely trivial (A Satyr against Coffee). The satirist can be detached narrator, oppressive speech-maker, or ironic commentator, and levels of intensity vary wildly. His attitude toward his subject can range from delight to distaste, from cheerful laughter to sharp mockery or glum denunciation. He may or may not believe that anything can change: Congreve’s The Way of the World (1700) reflects grim acquiescence in an unalterable state of affairs, whereas Southerne’s The Wives’ Excuse (another hard-hitting social satire, staged nine years earlier) furiously denounces what the playwright cannot resign himself to.

The satirist may rail angrily against a despised subject, or he may affectionately nudge a target with whom he mostly sympathizes, as in Fielding’s mockery of Parson Adams. He may or may not be having fun. His purpose may be pure entertainment (Ward’s The Rambling Rakes), abuse for the pleasure of abuse (Rochester’s My Lord All-pride), or linguistic/formal play (Churchill’s The Ghost). Satire can be plaintive (Tutchin’s A Pindarick Ode, in the Praise of Folly and Knavery), defensive (Defoe’s The True-Born Englishman), or preachy (Fielding’s Amelia). Satirists write purposive defamation (Swift’s Fable of Midas) and propaganda (Garth’s Dispensary); they deflate their targets (Tom Thumb) or denounce them (The Dunciad). Many post-1682 satires on Shaftesbury are expressions of gleeful triumphalism; works like Richard Cumberland’s The West Indian are exercises in satiric education. Rochester’s Upon Nothinge, Bernard Mandeville’s The Fable of the Bees, and Charles Macklin’s The School for Husbands are ultimately thought-provocative (though in quite distinct ways), and Jure Divino is a piece of sober ideological argumentation. Satirists sometimes invite laughter, as in George Colman the elder’s Polly Honeycombe, and sometimes harsh judgment, as in The Fall of Mortimer. My point here is diversity: even within a very short time span, “satire” can mean a wide range of things to writers, readers, and theatergoers. Satirists produce different kinds of satire, and they also write for different kinds of
audiences. I will deal with both explicit and implicit notions of audience for satire throughout this book, but here at the outset I want to look briefly at what price and format have to tell us about implied audience and circulation.

III. Price, format, dissemination, and implied audiences

Few students of satire have paid serious attention to its material contexts. The standard unspoken assumption seems to be that the works we regard as great were widely read and celebrated among their contemporaries, and that any literate person had access to every published text. In fact, price and format make a great deal of difference to how extensively satires were circulated and to whom. What did satire cost, and who could buy it?

A systematic recovery of prices would have been all but impossible until very recently, and it remains a spotty and frustrating business. Some printed material carries its price on the title page, and publishers sometimes advertise prices in the newspapers or in lists appended to individual publications. Before 1702—and the advent of daily newspapers—prices are harder to come by than later in the eighteenth century. *The Term Catalogues* give prices for the years from 1668 to 1709, but only occasionally; Narcissus Luttrell frequently records what he paid for pamphlets (1678-1730), but that is not necessarily the ostensible list price. The limits to our knowledge are real, but using the sources we do have (especially ECCO and the full-text searchable digital Burney newspapers), we can now accumulate a substantial number of prices and get some notion of price norms.

Before particular prices can mean anything, we need to have a sense of the value of money in the period at issue. Appreciating the buying power of eighteenth-century money is difficult, largely because of a value-translation issue. The price of *Law is a Bottomless-Pit* (the first of Arbuthnot’s 1712 “John Bull” pamphlets) is 3d, and Churchill’s *The Prophecy of Famine* goes for 2s 6d in 1763—are these inexpensive or comparatively steep prices, and how significant is the difference between them? How

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many people could readily have afforded these satires? As Robert D. Hume has pointed out, converting eighteenth-century prices into modern terms is fundamentally problematic: no single multiplier exists by which we may establish a present value for a sum of money. We cannot simply multiply a list price by a set number and arrive at the “right” figure.\(^{17}\) Prices were relatively stable for most of the eighteenth century, but only relatively, and a multiplier that might work for some commodities at some dates gets us nowhere for other products or at other dates. In the realm of “culture,” Hume suggests that a multiplier of 200-300 should usually give a reasonable indication of present-day value (492). If we use those figures, Arbuthnot’s pamphlet would have set buyers back somewhere between £2.40 and £3.60 by present-day standards. The 2s 6d that Churchill’s poem went for in 1763 amounts to considerably more money, somewhere between £24 and £36 in 2008 terms—far from a meaningless sum for most consumers.

Affordability depends not only upon price, but also upon income—who could without much difficulty afford to spend a shilling (or two, or three, or more) on a satire? What we have by way of primary material on income levels comes from a small number of well-known sources, the most famous of which is Gregory King’s *Natural and Political Observations* (1696; concerning the year 1688). King offers estimated population statistics for late-seventeenth-century England and describes demographic characteristics—including the numbers of people in different occupations, average incomes, and sizes of families.\(^{18}\) Modern economic historians have tested and tweaked the figures given by King and others, but they have found these reports persuasive in their fundamentals.\(^{19}\) The emended statistics indicate that, as of 1688, roughly 5% of the families in England grossed more than £100 per annum—suggesting, says Hume, that “no more than about 5 percent of the total population of England and Wales could have had

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\(^{18}\) “Natural and Political Observations and Conclusions upon the State and Condition of England,” in *Two Tracts by Gregory King*, ed. George E. Barnett (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1936). Other major sources for such information are Jacob Vanderlint’s *Money answers all Things* (1734) and Joseph Massie’s *Calculations of the Present Taxes* (1761).

the discretionary spending capacity to indulge significantly in the purchase of elite culture” (497).

Obviously consumer behavior is somewhat unpredictable. Someone making a £1000 per annum will not necessarily spend a lot on culture, and someone earning a pittance might very well scrape and save to buy a particularly coveted book. That said, we can safely assume some correlation, on the whole, between income and consumption of culture, especially in its costlier forms. As William St Clair bluntly observes, “To trace readership, we need to trace access. To trace access, we need to trace price.”

What was the price of satire in the long eighteenth century? Table 1.3 is a representative list of titles sold at several standard price categories (from 1d to 15s). The point is not to be as exhaustive as the limited evidence would permit, but to convey some sense of price norms for satire from 1650 to 1770. I include works across as broad a time span as is relevant for each price category. For example, 3d is a common price in 1700, but—in part because low-end works tend not to get advertised—later in the period that figure is seen only rarely. Conversely, many works were sold at 6d and 1s across the century, a fact this list should reflect. I include only printed texts in their original editions. Little certain knowledge is to be had about the price of scribally circulated manuscripts, but such works are unlikely to have been cheap. In the realm of print publication, I admit both the problem of piracy (making costly texts available at cut-rates and presumably increasing circulation) and the importance of binding (a work sold in simple boards is usually significantly less expensive than the same work in a fancy binding).

Notwithstanding these issues and the gaps in our knowledge, looking at what a number of satires cost throughout this period should yield useful conclusions about circulation.

Table 1.3. Standard Price Categories and Sample Titles (with format and length).

Where the price given comes from Luttrell—reflecting what he paid but not necessarily list price—I have marked the entry with an asterisk (*). Where the price comes from an advertisement, I have used a dagger (†), and where the price comes from The Term Catalogues I use a double dagger (‡). Otherwise,


the price is given internally (usually on the work’s title page, though sometimes listed on the half-title or last page). For each price category, I give the range of approximate value in present-day terms, using Hume’s multipliers (200-300 times the original price).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1d</th>
<th>80 pence-£1.20</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An Excellent New Ballad between Tom the Tory, and Toney the Whigg (1678); 1/2; 1 sheet.*</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Dialogue between Duke Lauderdale and the Lord Danby (1679/80); 1/2; 1 sheet.*</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Devil Pursued: or, the Right Saddle Laid upon the Right Mare. A Satyr upon Madam Celliers (1680); 1/2; 1 sheet.*</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Essex Ballad (1680); 1; 1 sheet.*</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Deliquium: or, The Grievances of the Nation discovered in a dream (1680?); 1/2; 1 sheet.*</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Loyal Satyr against Whiggism (1682); 2; 4pp.*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arthur Maynwaring, The King of Hearts (1690); 2; 5pp.*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tom Brown, A Satyr upon the French King, written by a Non-swearing Parson, and drop’d out of his Pocket at Samm’s Coffee House (1697); 1/2; 1 sheet.*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maynwaring (?), An Address to Our Sovereign Lady (1704); 1/2; 1p.*</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Dog in the Wheel. A Satyr. With The Character of a Disinterested, Peaceable and Loyal Stat[e]man, in Opposition to that of a Busy, Turbulent, Speeching Peer (1705); 4; 16pp.*</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Long Vacation. A Satyr: Address’d to all Disconsolate Traders (1708); 8; 16pp.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joseph Browne, The Circus: or, British Olympicks, A Satyr on the Ring in Hide-Park (1709); 8; 16pp.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Defoe, A Letter to Mr. Bisset (1709); 8; 16pp.</td>
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<tr>
<td>O Tempora! or a Satyr on the Times (1710?); 8; 8pp.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Save-Alls (1710); 1/2; 1 sheet.*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swift, The Fable of Midas (1712); 1/2; 1 sheet.*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swift, T[of]l[a]nd’s Invitation to Dismal, to Dine with the Calves-Head Club (1712); 1/2; 1 sheet.*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swift, A Hue and cry after Dismal (1712); 1/2; 1 sheet.*</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>2d</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dryden, Mac Flecknoe (pub. 1682); 4; 16pp.*</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Tutchin, The Tribe of Levi (1691); 8; 16pp.*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ned Ward, A Walk to Islington: with a Description of New Tunbridge-Wells, and Sadler’s Musick-House (1699); 8; 16pp.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Republican Bullies Or, a sham Battel between two of a side, in a Dialogue between Mr. Review and the Observator, lately fall’n out about keeping the Queen’s Peace (1705); 4; 8pp.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Korath: or the Danger of Schism. A Satyr (1705); 4; 8pp.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bess o’ Bedlam’s Love to her Brother Tom: With a Word in behalf of Poor Brother Ben Hoadly (1709); 8; 24pp. (2nd edn. gives price)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swift, A Meditation upon a Broom-stick (1710); 8; 16pp.</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Arbuthnot, John Bull In His Senses (the second part of “John Bull”); 1712); 8; 16pp.</td>
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<th>3d</th>
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<tr>
<td>Thomas Shadwell, The Tory-Poets: A Satyr (1682); 4; 20pp.*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Richard Ames, The Female Fire-Ships. A Satyr against Whoring (1691); 4; 24pp.*</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Search after Wit; or, a Visitation of the Authors: in Answer to The late Search after Claret (1691); 4; 24pp.*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ward, The Quack-Vinners: or, a Satyr against Bad Wine (1711); 8; 24pp.*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brooke and Hellier, A Satyr (1712); 8; 32pp.* (Luttrell: 4d)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arbuthnot, The Art of Political Lying (1712); 8; 24pp.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arbuthnot, Law is a Bottomless-Pit (the first part of “John Bull”); 1712); 8; 24pp.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Satyr upon Old Maids (1713); 4; 12pp.*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thomas Brereton, Charnock’s Remains: Or, S[acheverel] his Coronation. A Satyr: Being a Parody upon Dryden’s Mac-Fleckno (1713); 8; 24pp.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swift, The First Ode of the Second Book of Horace Paraphras’d: And Address’d to Richard St[ee]le, Esq; (1714); 4; 12pp.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pope, A Full and True Account of a Horrid and Barbarous Revenge by Poison, On the Body of Mr. Edmund Curll, Bookseller (1716); 2; 6pp.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Hell-Fire-Club: Kept by a Society of Blasphemers. A Satyr (1721); 8; 24pp.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belsize-House. A Satyr (1722); 8; 32pp.</td>
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<tr>
<td>British Worthies: or, Characters of the Age. A Panegyrico-Satirical Poem (1758); 8; 15pp.</td>
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<th>4d</th>
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<td>R. D., A Satyr against Satyrs: or, St. Peter’s Vision Transubstantiated (1680); 4; 34pp.*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mercurius Menippeus. The Loyal Satyrist, or, Hudibras in Prose (1682); 4; 26pp.*</td>
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Excise-Bill

Patriotism! A Farce. As is acted by his Majesty’s Servants

Ward,

John Taperell,

Fielding,

John Dunton,

Huberturn’d Courtier. A Satyr

Dryden,

6

Behn,

10

Ranelagh House: A Satire in Prose. In the Manner of Monsieur Le Sage

The Counterpart to the State-Dunces

The City Triumphant: or, the Burning of the Excise-Monster. A New Ballad

Deal in an Uproar. A Satyr

Mirth in Ridicule: or, a Satyr against Immoderate Laughing

Dryden,

Swift,

The Swan Tripe-Club in Dublin. A Satyr

A Satyr against Painting; In Burlesque Verse: Submitted to the Judicious

Defoe,

The Monosyllable If! A Satire

Fontenoy, A New Satiric Ballad

The Dance-Master. A Satyr. Canto I

Defoe,

The Citizen’s Procession, or, the Smugler’s Success and the Patriots Disappointment. Being An excellent New Ballad on the

Thomas Tickell,

A Hymn to Money. A Satyr

Ames,

A Satirical Epistle to Mr. Pope

Fielding,

Savage,

Human Passions: A Satyr. To which is added, An Ode to Impudence

Defoe,

The Search after Claret

The Shoe-Maker Beyond his Last: or a satyr upon Scurrilous Poets, especially Ned Ward

A Satyr upon the Present Times

Arbuthnot,

A Satirical Epistle to Mr. Pope

Swift,

A Hymn to the Pillory

John Dennis (?),

A Satirical Epistle to Mr. Pope

Swift,

A Hymn to the Pillory

Defoe,

The Shoe-Maker Beyond his Last: or a satyr upon Scurrilous Poets, especially Ned Ward

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A Satyr upon the Present Times

Arbuthnot,

A Satirical Epistle to Mr. Pope

Swift,

A Hymn to the Pillory

John Dennis (?),

A Satirical Epistle to Mr. Pope

Swift,
1s [£9.60-£14.40]
Shadwell, *The Sullen Lovers* (1668); 4th; 112pp.†
Buckingham, *The Rehearsal* (1672); 4th; 60pp.‡
Wycherley, *The Country-Wife* (1675); 4th; 108pp.‡
Etherege, *The Man of Mode* (1676); 4th; 104pp.‡
Dryden, *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681); 2nd; 36pp.*
Dryden, *The Spanish Fryar* (1681); 4th; 94pp.‡
Dryden and Nahum Tate, *The Second Part of Absalom and Achitophel* (1682); 2nd; 36pp.*
Various, *Commentatory Verses, on the Author of the Two Arthurs, and the Satyr against Wit* (1700); 2nd; 32pp.∗
Defoe, *More Reformation. A Satyr upon Himself* (1703); 4th; 60pp.‡
Ward, *In Imitation of Hudibras. The Dissenting Hypocrite, or Occasional Conformist* (1704); 8th; 96pp.
Dunton, *The Pulpit-Fool. A Satyr* (1707); 4th; 72pp.†
Ward, *The Wooden World Dissected* (1707); 12th; 120pp.†
Pope, *An Essay on Criticism* (1711); 4th; 48pp.†
Swift, *The Conduct of the Allies* (3rd edn.; 1711); 8th; 96pp.†
Pope, *The Rape of the Lock* (1714 version); 8th; 56pp.†
Dunton (?), Mordecai’s Memorial: or, There’s Nothing done for him. Being A Satyr upon Some-body, but I name No-body (1716); 8th; 64pp.

*The Way of the Town*: or, the Sham-Heiress. A Burlesque Poem. Being a Satyr on the Ladies of Pleasure and the Beaux’s of the Town (1717); 8th; 40pp.

William Chetwood, *The Stock-Jobbers or, the Humours of Exchange-Alley* (1720); 8th; 48pp.†
Hugh Chamberlen (?), *News from Hell: or, A Match for the Directors; A Satire* (1721); 2nd; 16pp.
Edward Young, *The Universal Passion. Satire II* (1725); 2nd; 20pp.†
*The Signal: or, a Satyr against Modesty* (1727); 2nd; 16pp.
Pope, *The Dunciad* (1728); 8th; 48pp.†
Charles Forman, *Protesilaus: or, the Character of an Evil Minister* (1730); 8th; 62pp.
Fielding, *The Tragedy of Tragedies, or the Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great* (1731); 8th; 66pp.
 Verres and his Scribblers: *A Satire in Three Cantos* (1732); 8th; 80pp.
James Bramston, *The Man of Taste* (1733); 2nd; 16pp.
Pope, *The First Satire of the Second Book of Horace, Imitated* (1733); 2nd; 38pp.†
Paul Whitehead, *The State Dunces. Inscribed to Mr. Pope* (1733); 2nd; 21pp.
Pope, *An Epistle from Mr. Pope, to Dr. Arbuthnot* (1735); 2nd; 24pp.†
Discontent; or, an Essay on Faction: a Satire. Address’d to the Writers of the Craftsman, and other Party Papers (1736); 2nd; 16pp.


*The Satirists: A Satire* (1739); 2nd; 16pp.
Swift, *Verses on the Death of Dr. [Swift], D. S. P. D.* (1739); 2nd; 20pp.†
Laugh upon Laugh, or *Laughter Ridicul’d* (1740); 8th; 60pp.
Whitehead, *An Essay on Ridicule* (1743); 2nd; 20pp.†
John Brown, *An Essay on Satire: Occasion’d by the Death of Mr. Pope* (1745); 4th; 32pp.
Hogarth, *Beer Street* (1751) (some advertised for 1s 6d)†
Hogarth, *Gin Lane* (1751) (some advertised for 1s 6d)†
Richard Owen Cambridge, *A Dialogue between a Member of Parliament and His Servant. In Imitation of the Seventh Satire of the Second Book of Horace* (1752); 4th; 28pp.†
Smollett, *The Reprisal: or, the Tars of Old England* (1757); 8th; 52pp.
*The Age of Dullness: A Satire. By a Natural Son of the late Mr. Pope* (1757); 4th; 27pp.†
David Garrick, *The Fribbleriad* (1761); 4th; 28pp.
Thomas Nevele, *The Fourteenth Satire of Juvenal Imitated* (1769); 4th; 18pp.†

1s 6d [£14.40-£21.60]
Brown (?), *The Stage-Beaux toss’d in a Blanket* (1704); 4th; 76pp.
Susanna Centlivre, *The Basset-Table* (1705); 4th; 76pp.
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Young, *Love of Fame, The Universal Passion. In Seven Characteristical Satires* (1728); 8°; 188pp. [English edition; advertised in *The Monthly Catalogue*]

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<td>4s (£38.40-£57.60)</td>
<td>Swift, <em>A Tale of a Tub</em> (1704); 8°; 334pp.†</td>
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<td>Haywood, <em>Memoirs of a Certain Island Adjacent to the Kingdom of Utopia</em> (1725; with key); 8°; 298pp.†</td>
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<td>5s (£48-£72)</td>
<td>Defoe, <em>The Political History of the Devil</em> (1726); 8°; 316pp.†</td>
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<td>John Brown, <em>Essays on the Characteristics</em> (1751); 8°; 418pp.†</td>
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<td>Christopher Anstey, <em>The New Bath Guide</em> (1766); 4°; 132pp.†</td>
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<td>Sterne, <em>A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy</em> (1768); 8°; 2 vols. (242pp. + 218pp.) (sewed)†</td>
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<td>6s (£57.60-£86.40)</td>
<td>Giles Jacob, <em>The Poetical Register: Or, the Lives and Characters of the English Dramatick Poets</em> (1719-20); 8°; 2 vols. (381pp. + 376pp.)†</td>
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<td>Charlotte Lennox, <em>The Female Quixote</em> (1752); 2nd edn.: 12°; 2 vols. (284pp. + 319pp.) (bound; sewed, 5s)†</td>
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<td>John Shebbeare, <em>Letters on the English Nation</em> (1755); 8°; 2 vols. (295pp. + 311pp.) (bound; sewed, 7s)†</td>
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<td>Smollett, <em>Travels through France and Italy</em> (1766); 8°; 2 vols. (376pp. + 297pp.) (bound)†</td>
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<td>Defoe, <em>Jure Divino: A Satyr</em> (1706); 2°; 374pp. in 12 parts; by subscription (pirated version, 5s)†</td>
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What does this table imply for the circulation of satire? One point is that the distance between low-end and high-end is vast: the high price category (15s) is 180 times the lowest one (1d). A broadside priced at a penny would have been a pretty easy acquisition; for someone grossing less than £50 per annum, 6d would not have been a trivial sum, though if he were passably interested he might think it worth his while. A shilling does not sound like much, but it does represent 12 times the price of 1d and not an insignificant figure. Except in very extraordinary cases, the circulation of anything priced over 2 or 3 shillings (roughly £20 to £45 in modern value) was probably going to be limited to the relatively
elite. We need to appreciate the fact that ready access to a 4d pamphlet is very different from ready access to a fat novel priced at 5s—how many of the not-filthy-rich of 2008 would unhesitatingly drop £50 to £75 for a bit of light reading, even in the absence of television?

How much satire got sold at 1d, 6d, 1s and so on is impossible to guess. Late-seventeenth-century price information is scant at best, and what get advertised at any point in this period are usually not the less expensive items. That said, some facts are clear. One is that shorter tends to be cheaper, and for good reason. Paper accounted for a staggeringly large proportion of production costs: it was, says St Clair, “a commodity in its own right.”22 The correlation between length and price is inexact but considerable. The price of plays is more or less standardized: single titles tend to be 1s early in this period, and over time a price of 1s 6d becomes common. An obvious point is that the price of novels tends to be extortionate. The four volumes of Peregrine Pickle in boards would set one back 10s 6d, and bound the price goes up to 12s. Works a third that price would have been painfully expensive for all but a tiny percentage of the population. The large sale of such books as Robinson Crusoe (5s) and Gulliver’s Travels (8s 6d—roughly £80-£120 in modern terms) is testimony to a success even more phenomenal than most literary critics have realized.

Because price rises with length, most collections and miscellanies were quite expensive. In 1701, Dryden’s Plays are advertised (2 volumes in folio) at £1 12s—upwards of £300 in present-day money even by a conservative estimate. In March 1728, The Monthly Catalogue listed the “last Volume” of the Pope-Swift Miscellanies at 5s 6d; the two-volume Miscellanies had been advertised the previous summer at 8s 6d.23 Whether one calculates the latter at a mere £82 or more like £122, this was a very pricey enterprise. Some of Dryden’s, Pope’s, and Swift’s single titles sold considerably more cheaply when originally published, but when reprinted in larger volumes they were fiendishly expensive. Even the writings of lesser satirists were often startlingly pricey: in 1733, Tom Brown’s complete works were

22 St Clair, The Reading Nation, 26.
23 The Third Volume of the Monthly Catalogue: being A General Register of Books, Sermons, Plays, Poetry and Pamphlets, Printed and Published . . . in the Years 1727, and 1728 (3 vols. pub. 1725-29). The advertisements for the Miscellanies are in March 1728 (No. LIX; p. 26) and June 1727 (No. L, p. 63).
advertised in four volumes for 12s (£115-£173)—not exactly easy on the pocket. A 1719 ad puffs a 5-volume set of Ward’s Works for a dumbfounding £1 5s.24 The list price of volume one of Buckingham’s miscellaneous works, in 1704, is 5s (£48-£72); a collection of Rochester, Roscommon, and other “eminent hands” went for the same sum four years later; also priced at 5s was the 1715 Life and Posthumous Works of Maynwaring. Obviously a good Englishman with cash to spare might feel compelled to own the works of the preeminent writers of his isle, just as a patriotic Irishman might splurge on the famous Drapier’s works in 1745—but lengthy collections must have been largely out of the reach of the unwashed masses. At the very least, buying such a volume would represent a rare extravagance for most of the population, not a routine purchase.

Could a writer appeal to more than one market tranch simultaneously? Early in Pope’s career, he sold his collected works exclusively to a very upper-end audience, but he eventually came to resist the restrictions on readership imposed by steep prices. The first volume of his Works (1717) sold for a guinea in large folio, but the advertisement for the 1735 Works II (which included, among other things, the Moral Essays and the Horatian imitations) lists three different prices, two distinctly high and one significantly lower. The large folio is priced at a guinea, a smaller folio can be had for 12s, and, we are told, the contents of the volume “will with all convenient Speed be published in Twelves at 5s.”25 For whatever reason, the cheaper version came out in two octavo volumes for 3s each—not negligible by any means, but less than a third the cost of the large folio. The print runs of the pricier versions, James McLaverty reports, were considerably smaller than had been the case for the earlier Works, suggesting that Pope “was starting to focus on the production of a popular edition.”26 The text and apparatus of the octavo volumes, as McLaverty explains, differed from the larger format version in important ways. The folio and quarto

24 Ward’s individual pieces were almost all fairly cheap when sold singly (6d on average, except in the case of longer satires, which were usually priced at 1s), but collections of his work were quite expensive—not surprising, given their length. The complete London Spy is listed at 5s in 1703 (a 2nd edition is advertised for the same price in 1704, and a 4th in 1711). The “second volume” of his works is (in 1704) also priced at 5s; the “fourth volume” is advertised for 6s in 1708. In 1713 Nuptial Dialogues (in 2 vols.; originally printed in 1710) goes for 10s.
editions were “aimed at the ‘subscribing’ type of reader,” and the 6s edition was aimed at more “casual” readers, those desirous only of “an up-to-date version of Pope’s work that was accessible and comprehensible.” McLaverty points out that Pope, energized by the possibility of a broader readership, followed Works II with octavo editions of his earlier poems.27 Pope was perfectly clear on the effect of price on dissemination—and, while the “cheap” editions still cost a goodly sum, their existence suggests the desire to reach an audience not limited to the ultra elite.

Defoe’s satiric output nicely illustrates the importance of price. His many occasional satires had a sizeable readership, and scholars have tended to see him as a “Merchant-Writer” addressing hoi polloi. That impression is misleading and incomplete. John Richetti describes The True-Born Englishman as “very much popular poetry, near-doggerel directed at untutored understandings, ready to be hawked in the streets like a tabloid newspaper” 28—but this poem was reprinted in pricey collections that were successfully marketed to affluent readers. The dissemination history of Defoe’s satires does not suggest that he wrote exclusively for a lower-end audience. 29 The first compilation was printed in 1703 under the title A True Collection of the Writings of the Author of the True Born English-man. The anthology contained several early satires (including The Mock Mourners, Reformation of Manners, The Spanish Descent, and The Shortest-Way, in addition to The True-Born Englishman), and did well enough to prompt another edition. A Second Volume of the Writings of the Author of the True-Born English-man was published in 1705, including, among other texts, the following satires: A New Discovery of an Old Intreague, More Reformation, An Elegy on the Author of the True-Born-English-Man, A Hymn to the

27 McLaverty, Pope, Print and Meaning, 216, 227. On Pope’s subsequent octavos, see pp. 231-41. The General Evening Post for 31 May 1743 (No. 1513) advertises several volumes of Pope’s works at “underwritten Prices.” The second volume of poetry is listed at 7s 6d in quarto, and in a smaller format at 5s—“formerly,” we are told, priced at £1 1s and 12s respectively. Pope’s Iliad (complete in six volumes), “formerly sold for 1l. 1s. per Vol. or 6l. 6s. the Whole,” is now a sixth that price at £1 1s.


29 P. N. Furbank and W. R. Owens have provided the fullest account of the publishing history of Defoe’s works in A Critical Bibliography of Daniel Defoe (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1998), 3-6. I am indebted to them for the edition dates and prices.
Pillory, The Pacificator, and The Dissenter Misrepresented and Represented. The Second Volume cost 6s—a substantial sum—but it sold well enough to justify further editions.

These two volumes were reprinted again in 1710 (also priced at 6s), and subsequent editions were published (with some variations) in 1711, 1713, and 1714. Whatever the topicality of the individual satires contained therein, these books had a relatively long shelf life. Another volume appeared in 1721, entitled The Genuine Works of Mr. Daniel D’Foe, Author of the True-born English-Man, a Satyr. This collection included forty texts and sold for an astounding 12s. Such was his confidence in marketing his work that his longest satire, Jure Divino (1706), was published by subscription for 15s (£144-£216). Pirated versions appeared for a third of that price (still a hefty sum), and then in twelve parts at 1d each (totaling £9.60-£14.40). In his Review, Defoe complained bitterly about the “Robbery” represented by the “spurious” 5s edition; he appealed to “those Gentlemen” who had encouraged him to print Jure Divino, imploring them “to stand the Firmer by their Subscription.” Piracy notwithstanding, Defoe clearly imagined a different readership for Jure Divino than for his penny ballads, and that he made such a distinction is not shocking. A work like Ye True-Born Englishmen Proceed is stingingly direct in its denunciation of its targets; Jure Divino is a heavy-going argument about the contractual and divine right theories of government, and following it requires a lot of the reader. Exactly how much money Defoe made from his works is impossible to calculate, but several points are clear. His early satires were popular enough to sell long after their “occasion”; they sold sufficiently well to warrant further editions; and his readership does not appear to have been limited to the masses, but instead extended to those well-enough to do to pay very steep prices for their books.

Price clearly matters to readership, and so does availability. Many of the satires produced in the long eighteenth century are topical and ephemeral—they appear just once or are reprinted only for a brief period. The vast majority of the non-canonical satires are transitory, but not all of them simply vanish.

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30 The subscription price, as Furbank and Owens point out, was initially 10s (advertised in 1704); publication was delayed (for which Defoe was apologizing in the Review by January 1705), and when Jure Divino finally appeared the price had risen to 15s (Critical Bibliography, 75-76).

31 A Review of the State of the English Nation, 20 July 1706 (No. 87).
Defoe’s *Ye True-Born Englishmen Proceed* is reprinted seven times in 1701, and *The Mock Mourners* nine times a year later; *The Political History of the Devil* (1726) goes to a second edition in 1727, a third in 1734, and is reprinted at least eleven more times in the century. Much the most popular of Defoe’s satires is of course *The True-Born Englishman*, which appears again and again throughout the hundred years following its initial publication (1s is the standard price). Several of Ward’s satires are regularly reprinted, including *A Trip to Jamaica* (published in 1698 and in its seventh edition by 1700) and *Female Policy Detected*, which comes out at least a dozen times between 1695 and 1788. Garth’s *Dispensary* is popular (three 1699 editions; by 1768, it is in its eleventh). *Hudibras* is a particularly spectacular example of a topical satire with a long afterlife: new editions of Butler’s poem appear every decade from the 1660s to the 1790s. Among the more frequently reprinted satires of the eighteenth century proper is Henry Carey’s *Dragon of Wantley*, a lively parody of Italian opera, staged and published in 1737 and already in its fourteenth edition the next year.

Works now considered historically important were sometimes regularly reprinted—*Gulliver’s Travels* and *The Dunciad* are prominent examples—but often not. *Absalom and Achitophel* is frequently reissued early in the period (the tenth edition comes out in 1701), but, except for a Latin edition in 1723, it does not appear separately in England after 1708. *Mac Flecknoe* is published by itself only three times (in 1682, 1692, and 1709). Of Dryden’s satiric *œuvres*, the works popular over the longest period of time are probably *The Spanish Fryar* and the *Fables Ancient and Modern*. His now celebrated *Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire* appears only in the fat volume of translations—to my knowledge it was never published alone.32 Swift’s *Modest Proposal* is printed singly only in 1729 and 1730. Johnson’s *London* goes through four editions by 1739 and is reprinted in 1750, but *The Vanity of Human Wishes* appears separately in 1749 and not again. Much more widely visible is Churchill’s *Rosciad*, which runs through five editions in 1761 (at 1s 6d), and is in its ninth by 1765 (at 2s 6d). The

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Memoirs of Scriblerus is never printed in London by itself. It comes out in Dublin in 1741, and then in England that year as part of Pope’s Works; the volume was vastly expensive at 10s 6d or a guinea, depending on format. Students of eighteenth-century satire find Pope’s Epistle to Arbuthnot very important, but it is published alone only in 1735. It is included in Works II, the cheapest version of which was 3s. Literary critics now tend to assume that major works were widely available upon immediate publication and forever accessible to all readers, but this is by no means universally true.

The price of satire is interesting in two very different ways. (1) Collections and larger works (e.g., Christopher Anstey’s New Bath Guide, at 5s for 132 pages) were punitively expensive for any but a small fraction of the population. (2) A surprising number of satires were affordable. The most common prices of satiric poems and pamphlets in this period are 6d and 1s—not trifling sums for most buyers, but hardly impossible. Broadsides, squibs, and other short works sold singly were clearly meant to be more extensively disseminated than big books or even plays. A huge quantity of satires—mostly topical and timely—were fairly short, printed singly, and sold at a level that would allow for reasonably wide circulation. These works were meant to reach and influence readers, and, while a lower-end price range does not guarantee broad distribution, it does at least create the possibility of wide sale and real-world effect.

IV. The “definition” quagmire
At this juncture I need to address an awkward question: what counts as “satire”? Or, in other words, what gets included or excluded from this study and why? Definitions are numerous, exhibit a considerable amount of agreement, and prove surprisingly unhelpful for reasons we need briefly to explore.

Satire critics often begin their discussions by observing that satire is hard to pin down conceptually—not without reason does James E. Gill call it “that most protean literary something.”\footnote{Gill, preface to Cutting Edges: Postmodern Critical Essays on Eighteenth-Century Satire, ed. Gill (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), ix.} Difficulties notwithstanding, most scholars believe that they have some notion of what “satire” is and
what its central characteristics are. In *Anatomy of Criticism*, Northrop Frye argued that “essential to satire . . . is an object of attack” plus “wit and humor”—pretty standard criteria.³⁴ What Frye viewed as requisite remains central for a large number of critics: Linda A. Morris states matter-of-factly in 2007 that “literary satire is understood to be work that relies upon humor to expose both human and institutional failures.”³⁵

Most definitions reflect at least five basic assumptions about satire. (1) It is a *literary* art. (2) It *attacks* its targets, with varying degrees of seriousness or intensity. Brian A. Connery and Kirk Combe insist that, “Satirists specialize in demolition projects,” and George A. Test concludes, “That satire is an attack is probably the least debatable claim one can make about it.”³⁶ (3) Its targets are *real*—they represent, in Edward W. Rosenheim’s words, “discernible historical particulars.”³⁷ (4) It is to some extent *humorous*. (5) It is essentially a *negative* enterprise, generally seen as reflecting a sour view of human nature. Some critics suggest that little good can come of satire: the satirist, says Leonard Feinberg, believes that there “are many things wrong in the world,” and that “nothing much is likely to be done about it.”³⁸ Once upon a time satire was seen as a moral art, and some critics in the tradition of Maynard Mack still stress satire’s moral basis and its reformative potential, though Griffin and others have usefully warned against over-emphasizing its “moral intensity.”³⁹ The still-current definitional principles work passably well when applied to some of the satires most commonly studied by literary

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critics. Pope’s *Dunciad* (1728, 1729, 1743) is a punitive and sometimes lively put-down of otherwise unknown hack poets and political writers; it is written out of contempt for a development (the burgeoning of “low” culture) that is unlikely to be stopped; and it is a literary masterpiece penned by a brilliant technician. The problem is that our definitional assumptions tend to derive from a small number of works, and reading more than a few carefully selected satires, those assumptions quickly come to seem inadequate. More extensive demonstration of this point will have to await the survey. For the moment I will observe that a huge number of satirists seem less concerned with literary form and aesthetics than with content and immediate impact; much of this satire is not terribly funny; some of it is written not to punish or reform a target but to instruct like-minded readers (and hence is positive, not negative, in thrust); and “attack” is a crude oversimplification or simply not true in a substantial number of cases.

Critics have opinions about what is “essential” to this kind of writing, about what it must and must not do, but counterexamples abound if we want to find them. Introducing a 2007 volume on satire, Ruben Quintero states flatly that satirists “write not merely out of personal indignation, but with a sense of moral vocation and a concern for the public interest”—and he then quotes Pope. Pope’s Moral Essays nicely bear out Quintero’s assertion, but what of Rochester’s *On Poet Ninny* or the satirical bits of Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*? The first is hardly motivated by “concern for the public interest,” and the latter has nothing in it of indignation. Many critics have regarded Pope’s *Rape of the Lock* as satiric, but even that poem fails to meet Quintero’s criteria. This raises an obvious question. If satire cannot be easily identified on the basis of the standard set of components, then what counts as satire? For the purposes of this survey, I have adopted a purely pragmatic approach. I include anything labeled a “satire” by its author; anything which we have cause to believe was understood by contemporaries as a satire; and anything which has been treated as satirical by modern critics. I have grave reservations about using a definition to generate a list of works, but having completed a pass through several hundred satires, I will with due caution offer a descriptive characterization (not a definition) of my own.

Satire involves some kind of critique—that is point one. The critique can be of particular people, of types, of institutions, of modes of behavior, or any number of other things. I am deliberately using a
milder term than “attack,” which has unavoidable but misleading implications concerning motive, negativity, and the degree of hostility behind the satire. Satire is not only critique, of course, and not all critique is satire. A grumpy reader’s report and a negative book review are critical, and occasionally meant to wound. In part, what prevents them from being satirical is the consent of the target. In submitting and publishing manuscripts one is agreeing to have one’s work scrutinized, and solicited commentary of this sort is not usually satiric. Satire involves an element of critique, but beyond that, it needs something else. Critics have tended to use a formula in which satire equals attack/ridicule plus humor/wit. I would suggest a more open set of formulae, including but not limited to: critique plus distortion (obvious or not), or critique plus humorous ridicule, or critique plus gratuitousness in motive.

This non-definition is basically valid, but I have doubts about the practical utility of any such discussion. Attempts to encapsulate satire have tended to be overly exclusionary or fatuously inclusionary. Neither helps. In the first case, we find ourselves in the role of Elder Olson, who arrived at a definition of comedy which proved to his satisfaction that Shakespeare never wrote one. Many of the best satire critics have invoked a narrow definition only to dispense with it in practice, as in the simultaneous assumptions that satire is motivated by righteous indignation and that The Rape of the Lock is satiric. Abandoning a restrictive definition is better than following it—and some do more or less stick to their rigid sense of what counts—but I see little point in generating a definition only to leave it behind.

Broadening out does not get us much further: a set of concepts capacious enough to apply to everything in practice help us with nothing. Definitional principles that apply equally well to Rochester’s Satyre against Reason and Mankind, Dryden’s The Kind Keeper, Gould’s Love given o’re, Defoe’s Jure Divino, Johnson’s London, and Garrick’s Lethe—all identified as satires by their authors—are unlikely to illumine any of the texts. Common ground there is some, but what do we gain by over-emphasizing it? Howard D. Weinbrot opens his important study of “Menippean satire” with an abbreviated but lengthy list of works to which critics have applied that label—he gives thirty-five titles, among which are Praise of

Folly, Johnson’s Dictionary, Alice and Wonderland, and The Waste Land. A genre that includes such a range of exemplars, he rightly observes, “is less baggy than bulbous.” Our concept of satire needs to be able to accommodate works labeled “satire” and contemporaneous enterprises manifestly similar in design, but at some point a generalized definition simply becomes useless. I am therefore not proposing that we expand standard definitions to fit all candidates for inclusion. As should be clear at this point, I do not believe that the struggle to “explain” satire will be resolved by the development of a new and improved definition to replace the bad old definitions of yesteryear. We need conceptual flexibility, not one-definition-fits-all. Satire has been written in many different ways, from many different standpoints, with varying degrees of intensity and hostility, and for very different reasons. What I am trying to do here is to provide a kind of descriptive taxonomy, one that permits us to identify the aims and to discuss the operational modes of a multifarious phenomenon over a period of 120 years.

V. A taxonomic methodology

Definitions should not generate a reading list; they should describe it. If the primary material happens to be scattered and various, then a single definition of any specificity whatever will pertain to only a small percentage of it. I want to ask, very simply, what we find if we look at a whole lot of satires and try to categorize them. My taxonomy depends most broadly upon distinguishing among three fundamentally different types of satiric enterprise. (1) **Attack.** In the first and best-known mode, the element of critique is dominant, the satire essentially negative. (2) “Distributive” satire, which can offer both negative and positive examples, or even exemplary critique. Classical satire theory allows for the possibility of recommendation of virtue as well as denunciation of vice, position Dryden notes and endorses in his Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire. Some satire is basically positive in thrust; the critique is offset by the presentation of positives, and sometimes it is largely implicit. (3) **Provocation.** Some satirists do more than render judgment, instead aiming to provoke thought, issue a warning, and/or

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41 Weinbrot, Menippean Satire Reconsidered, 2.
unsettle the reader. As a first step in dealing with particular works, we need to judge their essential nature and central thrust, to classify them as negative, or mixed-to-positive, or speculative/interrogatory. Beyond that, three important realms in which satires differ fall under the headings of motive, nature of judgment, and intensity.

**Motive.** For some satires “attack” is an irrelevant concept, and neither does “reform” seem helpful. Those satirists who do seem motivated by reformative/educative impulses are often addressing an audience they believe will be receptive to their critique. Defoe, as we will see, is looking neither to show up nor to rescue hardened sinners; he is offering instruction to like-minded readers. Describing even negative-mode satires merely as “attack” gets us nowhere. We need to differentiate between (1a) purely negative drubbing of a target for reasons of personal hostility and (1b) bashing someone who is threatening something regarded by the satirist as important, sacred, and worthwhile. This is what separates *Mac Flecknoe* and *Absalom and Achitophel*. There is an equally important distinction to be made between (1c) satire that is vehemently protesting injustice, wastage, and corruption as a way of demanding change (Southerne’s *The Wives’ Excuse*), and (1d) satire that objects to or laments a state of affairs perceived to be unchangeable (Congreve’s *Way of the World*). Other satires involve something more than rendering judgment. They (1e) issue warnings to readers they wish ultimately to help (Defoe’s *The Shortest-Way*); (1f) explore or argue a set of philosophical, political, or social principles (Mandeville’s *Fable of the Bees*); or (1g) provoke thought or doubt (Rochester’s *Upon Nothinge*). One set of questions that we should bring to satires, then, involves motive (granting that some satires “do” more than one thing). Such questions might not always be answerable with confidence, but in most cases we can be reasonably clear on what the satirist is trying to accomplish.

**Judgment.** A second set of distinctions have to do with the nature of the judgment being rendered. Again there are a variety of possibilities. (2a) Satiric judgment is often a matter of straight denunciation, however motivated (Swift does plenty of this). Sometimes we find (2b) a range of judgments, as in distributive satire, from bitterly condemnatory to mildly corrective to essentially positive (Sheridan’s *School for Scandal*). A less common phenomenon is (2c) actual exemplary judgment
(Steele’s *The Conscious Lovers*), where the recommendation of virtue is explicit and predominant, and
the criticism of vice is secondary or even implicit. We need therefore to try to determine the satirist’s
relationship to and attitude(s) toward his or her target(s). Does he or she judge from a comfortably
superior viewpoint, as Pope tends to, or are subjects treated sympathetically, as by Fielding and Sterne?
Are distinctions made among targets, or—as for Gay—is the world “all alike”?

**Intensity.** A third set of distinctions derive from differences in ferocity or lack of it. Satiric
“attack” might be (3a) exceedingly angry, violent, and vitriolic (Smollett’s *Adventures of an Atom*); (3b)
varyingly sharp or tart, pointing out individual or social defects (Hogarth’s *Gin Lane*); (3c) more
essentially cheerful, accepting the imperfections of human nature but mostly amused by them or hopeful
for change (Fielding on Parson Adams, Tom Jones, Booth); or (3d) purely comic, past a certain point in
which all genuine critique has probably vanished and what we have is not satire, but entertainment
presented for the sake of amusement (Behn’s *The Luckey Chance*). Evaluating tone and judging levels of
heat is not always an easy matter. Irony is a problem, and so is the possibility of “performing”
preachment. Juvenalian indignation can be deeply felt or only feigned, and the example of *Absalom and
Achitophel* makes plain that tonal restraint does not always mean an absence of passion. Granting these
difficulties, we need to recognize that attack without animosity is remote from satire that denounces with
real rancor.

Mingling various combinations of motive, judgment, and intensity easily yields more than a
dozen fairly distinct varieties of satire, as I have just demonstrated. I am arguing that no single definition
can be of much practical utility in helping us understand what any one of them is trying to do. Taxonomy
does much better. The bottom line is that identifying a work as “satire” is no more sufficient than is
identifying a car as a car or an insect as an insect; minis are not Hummers, and cockroaches are not
mosquitoes. Beyond the broad label, we need to categorize individual specimens according to a variety of
characteristics. Satires can be and have been classified according to genre, but that does not get us very
far: how much do *Friendship in Fashion, The Beggar’s Opera*, and *She Stoops to Conquer* have to do
with each other? Satires on similar targets have been lumped together; ditto works that use related
techniques. But Pope and Fielding satirize “low” culture in markedly different forms, as we will see, and though *Mac Flecknoe*, *The Dispensary*, and *The Rape of the Lock* are all mock-heroic, there are important distinctions to be made among them. Satire is a wildly variegated species. Taxonomy can help us differentiate (in more than one realm) and alert us to the purposiveness and features and devices of individual satires. It does not tell us what to think of a particular specimen, but instead gives us questions and discriminators that sensitize us to its features. Taxonomy serves as a warning against the simplistic reduction of “satire” to “attack,” but it is also useful insofar as we want accurately to describe the primary material.

Some comments about that material, the evidentiary basis of the survey that constitutes most of this book. In the twelve satire studies discussed in section one of this chapter, anywhere from 20 to 82 satires are mentioned, and actual conclusions seem to derive from smaller numbers still. I cite more than a thousand (1,022, including 272 in notes), roughly a third of the upwards of 3,000 that contribute to the conclusions of this book. I realize that my predecessors read works they did not cite, and that I do not mention every satire I have read—but the disparity is nevertheless sobering. Dealing at length with a few satires illuminates the chosen works, but it does so in an artificially limited context. Unlike most of my predecessors, I am treating a great many works, mostly very briefly. I read all the printed satires I could find (including both those originally printed and manuscript poems printed in modern sources), as well as some that exist only in manuscript form, and I have tried to represent the differences among them and the prominent trends apparent at any given time. Targets differ from work to work, of course, but more interesting for my purposes are variations in attitude toward target, tone, concept of audience, and evident purpose. I am concerned throughout with trying to characterize the nature of the enterprise: what is the satirist trying to accomplish? Discussing authorial intention is a dubious business and its legitimacy has been hotly contested, but for most satires we can constructively and with reasonable certainty draw conclusions about what the satirist thought he was doing. I do not refer to every example of a particular type (and I doubt readers will wish I had), but I do try to represent the full spectrum of possibilities and to acknowledge outliers and oddities.
A second issue concerns inclusivity. My coverage of fiction and drama has disconcerted some readers of my manuscript, who feel that those genres are beyond the satiric pale. Obviously I disagree. Most studies of satire privilege verse, which would not be a problem if conclusions were presented as generically specific. Instead, what we are usually told is that “Restoration satire does X,” with reference to a few poems by Dryden, Rochester, Butler and Oldham. In the realm of “Augustan” satire, some non-poetry gets attention—see Gulliver and A Modest Proposal—but not much. Writing more than forty years ago, Ronald Paulson made a powerful case in Satire and the Novel for recognizing the presence of satire in novels, even though the novels themselves are not “satires.” Plays seem to have at least equal claim to satiric status. Playwrights of the time quite regularly apply the label “satire” to their works, as for example Dryden’s Kind Keeper, Congreve’s Double-Dealer, Fielding’s Modern Husband, Dodsley’s Toy-Shop, and Garrick’s Lethe, among others. By what logic can we justify forming general conclusions about “eighteenth-century satire” that disallow author-labeled satires in a genre other than poetry?

Dryden’s testimony seems particularly significant on the issue of inclusivity. The author of a theoretical essay on satire largely concerning Roman formal verse, he nevertheless seems not to regard “satire” and “drama” as mutually exclusive concepts. In the Discourse, Dryden comments on “Roman Theatrical Satire”; in the seventies he had defended the Kind Keeper as “an honest Satyre” and praised Wycherley’s Plain-Dealer as “one of the most bold, most general, and most useful Satyres which has ever been presented on the English theater.” Dryden was the author of two of the most celebrated satiric poems of the long eighteenth century and he was one of the principal theorists of satire—but he definitely allows for the possibility that a play can be a satire.

The exclusion of fiction and drama from general purpose satire studies has to do in part with the fact that, though often satiric or partially satiric, plays and novels are not usually “satires.” The problem is that this exclusion is applied arbitrarily. Most critics would count The Rehearsal and The Way of the World as satire, and some of Fielding’s plays turn up regularly in discussions of satire. Claiming that

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42 Works, 4:41; “Apology for Heroique Poetry; and Poetique Licence,” prefaced to The State of Innocence, in Works, 12:89.
Thomas Duffett’s burlesques are satiric and treating Macklin and Foote as dramatic satirists is unlikely to raise hackles. The problem, then, is not really genre but the type of satire presented therein. Matthew J. Kinservik’s conclusion seems about right to me: “A play characterized by cynicism, attack, and negative examples is normally called ‘satiric,’ whereas one that features exemplary characters, sympathy, and benevolence is generally considered ‘sentimental.’ This strikes me as a false distinction. The difference lies in the dramatic emphasis, not in the ostensible didactic effect on spectators.” Take Shadwell’s *Squire of Alsatia*, which represents a kind of satiric venture remote from (say) *The Dunciad* or even something like Foote’s *Minor*, but which also unquestionably displays a didactic/satiric agenda of a sort that became common in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century comedy. On what basis do we have the right to ignore it?

I admit the problem of treating works that are “satirical” rather than “satires.” What percentage of the whole needs to be satiric for it to be legitimately discussable? No one would deny that *Mac Flecknoe* is a satire, and most would agree that *Tristram Shandy* is satirical without being “a satire,” but a lot of works fall somewhere in between. In the absence of an obvious and tidy boundary, where one draws the line is essentially an individual choice. In many cases, the presence of characters and plot dilutes whatever satire exists. Such is the case in Fielding’s novels and in the “softer” satiric drama of the 1760s, though not all satiric plays and novels work that way—see Southerne’s *The Wives’ Excuse*, *The Fall of Mortimer*, Smollett’s *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, Macklin’s *Man of the World*. Readers who jib at my including *Tom Jones* but accept a section on Smollett without hesitation are obviously not troubled by the admixture of satire, plot, and characters. Excluding all works not self-labeled as satire is no saner for drama and fiction than it is for verse. My principles of inclusion are the same for non-poetry as for poetry—though I see no reason to pretend that a partly-satiric novel is going to produce the same effect or work the same way as a poem devoted entirely to satire. Fiction that does much with semi-plausible characterization and “real life” tends to embed satire in a not-purely-satiric context. The same is true of

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43 *Disciplining Satire*, 12.
most drama. A poem or prose squib can be only satire, but the addition of plot and character significantly changes the satiric effect. The result is not necessarily softer satire—Sarah Fielding’s *Volume the Last* is not exactly “soft”—but it is diluted. Granting generic differences, I do not think an attempt to reconstruct eighteenth-century attitudes toward satire can justifiably ignore all but verse and selected prose. If we are looking for where and how satire appeared, then we take it in all its manifestations.

A blunt admission: this kind of broadly-based survey cannot privilege the major satires as they are customarily privileged. Space is limited, satires are many, and my predecessors have produced sound interpretations of most of the canonical satires. I have therefore made no attempt to do justice to the subtleties of (say) Pope’s *Moral Essays* and Horatian imitations. In the few cases where I disagree with earlier critics about textual readings I have said so at some length, as with *Hudibras* and *Gulliver’s Travels*, but my focus is on the nature of satiric practice across a substantial span of time. Because the perspective of this study is that of a generic history, I do not give special weight to the *tours de force* in my survey. I have tried to find as many satires as I can and have based my conclusions on them. I do try to make clear how I understand and categorize the masterpieces vis-à-vis less well-known contemporaneous satires, but I use as examples those works that seem most representative, illustrative, or significant without regard to familiarity, canonicity, or literary merit—even when this means devoting more space to Samuel Johnson of Cheshire than to the Samuel Johnson who wrote *The Vanity of Human Wishes*. One objection I anticipate is that I do not make a special effort to say more about female satirists. Although women did write satire in the long eighteenth century—Aphra Behn, Eliza Haywood, Sarah Fielding, and others—the clichés about satire as a male form are legitimate. Some feminist critics have argued for a female “tradition” of satire, and others have faulted male scholars for not finding ways to discuss more women. In a lukewarm review of Frank Palmeri’s *Satire, History, Novel* (2003), Monika Fludernik takes the author to task for his “rather niggardly inclusion of women”—an objection both
predictable and unfounded.\textsuperscript{44} The practice of satire was almost exclusively a male enterprise, and in keeping with the principles that govern my survey I make no apologies for being true to fact.

The organization of this book needs a word of explanation. With the exception of chapter 2, the sequence of chapters is chronological but non-developmental. By way of introduction to the survey of practice, chapter 2 takes up the issue of contemporary commentary—what critics and practitioners of satire had to say about it. Contrary to the conclusions drawn by P. K. Elkin in his 1973 study of contemporary critical commentary, we will find that eighteenth-century attitudes toward and theories of satire are not anything like neat and consistent. Satiric theory neither determines nor explains satiric practice, of course, but an impartial survey will demonstrate that contemporary notions of satire were wildly varied and contradictory. The chronological survey of practices occupies chapters 3 through 7. Chapter 3 covers the period from 1650-1685 (the reign of Charles II and the decade that immediately preceded it); chapter 4 focuses on satire at the end of the seventeenth century (roughly speaking, that produced under James II and William III); chapter 5 covers the quarter century between 1700 and 1725; chapter 6 is a study of the twenty-year “Scriblerian” heyday between the publication of \textit{Gulliver's Travels} (1726) and the deaths of Pope and Swift in the mid-forties; and chapter 7 surveys the period from 1745 to circa 1770. My reservations about the wisdom of periodization compel me to say that I do not for a minute imagine these sub-periods as neatly discrete entities. No one rang a bell in 1725, heralding a transition from the old way of doing satire to a new dominant mode. The breakpoints are only approximations; if works published a few years beyond a chapter’s ostensible cutoff date are relevant to or clearly belong to the culture I am describing in that chapter, I include them there. The \textit{terminus a quo} and \textit{terminus ad quem} of each chapter are inexact—but the “sub-periods” created by these divisions do represent times of significantly different trends.

Two points that I shall emphasize in my conclusion are worth introducing here. First: looking at a lot of satires changes one’s sense of satiric practice. A startling number of the much-studied works turn

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Eighteenth Century Fiction} 18 (2005): 255-57, at 256.
out to be either distinctly atypical or are typical only of a particular type of satire practiced at a particular time. The second point is simply that chronology matters. Critics tend to jump rather casually from *Absalom and Achitophel* to *The Rape of the Lock*, or to regard *Mac Flecknoe* and *Gulliver’s Travels* as high points of an “Augustan” mode, and to pay little attention to precise chronological placement.

Whatever the desire to understand great satire as transcending its moment, it is a highly time-specific form. This is obviously true in terms of subject and target: satirists in 1679-81 are mostly writing about Whigs, Tories, and the succession; in the 1730s, satirists attack Walpole and the dunces. But the difference between 1670s satire and that of the 1730s is not just a matter of theme and content—modes and methods of satire change considerably over time. I admit that when I began reading I saw little difference between a 1710 work and a 1730 one. Looking at a satire plucked from one decade and another plucked from a different decade does not tell us much, but reading a lot of works from any one decade often proves revelatory. Now, if I were given an anonymous and undated satire with topical references blacked out, I could in most cases place it within a decade, and often within a half-decade.

Modes flourish—and then vanish. The satires of the 1670s and those of the 1690s are a world apart, and so are those of the 1710s and 1730s. One of the most exciting results of this study is one I had no way of predicting at the outset: close chronological survey shows that satiric practice changes radically and sometimes rapidly several times across the long eighteenth century.45

The change is not evolutionary, and of assured causal explanation the reader will find none here. At times I have some confidence in determining factors that would have contributed to manifest changes in satiric practice, and where that is true I offer a tentative explanation of those factors. At the end of the seventeenth century, for example, an extraordinary amount of generalized satire gets written—satires on greed, brandy, women, or whatever—of a sort that is unprecedented in the Carolean period. The breakup

45 The dangers of broad overview are illustrated in Eric Rothstein’s otherwise learned and judicious volume in The Routledge History of English Poetry. Rothstein divides a 120-year span in half, treating 1720 as an arbitrary break-point. Within each sixty-year period works from different decades are promiscuously intermixed, obliterating subperiods and any sense of rapid chronological change. See *Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Poetry 1660-1780* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), chaps. 1 and 4
of the court circle in the 1680s no doubt played a part in this transformation: the world got bigger, and
before the advent of daily newspapers common knowledge was limited. A satirist writing for print in the
1690s (like Ward and Gould) is addressing readers very different from the close-knit court audience for
whom Carolean lampoonists wrote. By the 1730s, the dissemination of news is such that satirists can
count on a much higher level of familiarity with public figures and events, which was not the case in the
late seventeenth century. In this instance, extrinsic circumstances clearly matter to the kind of satire that
can be written. More often than not, the changes over time are somewhere between mysterious and
inexplicable. A writer is influenced, a work shaped, by all sorts of things—literary, political, social,
economic, personal—and “evolution” is an acutely unhelpful concept in literary history. The changes in
satiric practice from sub-period to sub-period are major, and I have traced them here. I frankly doubt,
however, that any tidy and logical explanation as to why they occur is to be found.

A taxonomic survey of the sort I am attempting demands a lot of its readers. It emphasizes
discontinuity rather than continuity, variousness rather than uniformity. It also requires dealing briefly
with a vast number of works, many of which are unfamiliar. The resulting flood of endless differentiation
is likely to become overwhelming, but I fear it is also necessary given the nature of this enterprise. Part
of the problem is that the taxonomic categories that help with material in one sub-period are less useful,
and sometimes irrelevant, in another. For that reason, each chapter has its own structure and logic, and
often a different set of groupings for readers to get accustomed to. The large number of non-congruent
taxonomic categories does not issue from my desire to oppress or abuse my readers: it is an honest
presentation of what is happening in the material surveyed. One cannot show diversity of practice and
rapidity of change without making something of a mess. The five survey chapters, moreover, are
dauntingly long. I have resisted advice to break them into ten smaller chapters because I suspect that
further fragmentation would make for more confusion. The chronological spans surveyed in chapters 3

46 For a discussion of this point, see Robert D. Hume, “Construction and Legitimation in Literary History,”
through 7 have significant internal coherence in terms of satiric practice. I have divided them into appropriate subsections, but I believe that trying to present each of the five as a distinct unit is important.

Satire in the long eighteenth century is tremendously exciting. It was widely practiced, took many different forms, and was written for many different purposes. Singling out a few texts has shrunk a big world; seeing that big world will, I believe, transform the way we conceive of satire in this period. We cannot generalize about a form of writing as practiced by a lot of writers across more than a century based upon a few works by our favorite authors. If we are going to talk seriously about what satire was like, we have to engage with more satires. That is what I have set out to do. My aim is not to “recuperate” the many minor works, and I will at no point argue their superiority to or equality with the works that are heavily studied. I am trying to provide a history of practice, and though I do not shrink from qualitative judgments, they are functionally irrelevant to what I am attempting. This is not a study of the best eighteenth-century satires—it is rather an account of the culture of satire as writers and readers would have understood, produced, and experienced it between 1650 and 1770.
What did eighteenth-century writers and critics have to say about satire? The relevant primary material is voluminous, including everything from Dryden’s high-minded Discourse to sermons on ridicule, authors’ self-promoting and formulaic prefaces, and innumerable passing strictures upon particular satires. The commentary is mostly patchy and occasional, and often intensely subjective and partisan. It tends either to focus exclusively on a single work (and so is not about “Satire” but about a satire or satirist) or to operate in the realm of abstraction (and so to offer no precise illustrations of its concepts). Only one serious attempt has been made to survey and analyze the many and varied critical pronouncements on satire written in this period—P. K. Elkin’s The Augustan Defence of Satire (1973). Elkin argued that contemporary commentators on satire mostly divided into two distinctly tidy and coherent camps—those “for” satire as morally useful and those “against” it as nasty and abusive. The object of this chapter is to test that conclusion.

A warning about structure is in order. The categories by which we might like to discuss these remarks are rarely, if ever, discrete in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century imagination, and most commentators were clearly not trying to provide a coherent “theory” of satire. The result is somewhat chaotic, and chaos is hard to organize effectively. To make the material comprehensible one needs to establish loose categories, but these are not well-defined “schools” of thought subscribed to by contemporaries and should not be taken as such. Because I believe that attempting to summarize the various contemporary remarks will only blunt the distinctions I hope to illuminate, I have tried to limit my interposition as much as possible. In practical terms, this means that I quote freely and extensively in an effort to let the participants speak for themselves. What we will discover is that these commentators—readers, writers, satirists, poets, politicians, preachers—did not see satire as we see satire. In this chapter, I will survey their often contradictory attitudes toward satire, beginning with often very general
statements on (1) concept and (2) purpose of satire, and then moving to more particularized commentary on (3) proper techniques and targets for satire and (4) the character of the satirist.

I. Concepts of satire

“‘Tis not a Song neither—It’s a sort of an Epigram, or rather an Epigrammatick Sonnet; I don’t know what to call it, but it’s Satyr—Sing it my Lord.” (Congreve, The Double-Dealer, III.i)

Few eighteenth-century discussions of satire reflect a sharply-defined “concept” of it. Those writers who do offer an explicit notion of satire are usually doing little more than routinely echoing sweet-sounding platitudes. The satirist is society’s moral custodian, and satire—Pope proclaims—is the “Sole Dread of Folly, Vice, and Insolence!”¹ Avowals to this effect are often repeated but largely irrelevant to the actual writing of satires, a fact pointed out by Dustin Griffin and other twentieth-century scholars: a lot of satirists noisily broadcast valorous intentions, and precious few mean a word of it.² This discrepancy notwithstanding, we need to ask what sort of meanings commentators seem to attach to the term “satire.”

“Satire”: etymology and terminology

Twentieth-century critics have made much of the etymological debate: does “satire” derive from the Roman “lanx satura” (full or mixed platter) or from the more negative Greek “satyr” (a malcontent who is half-human, half-beast)? Those contemporaries interested in classical satire and, like Dryden, in improving satire’s reputation are fuzzed about etymology and keen to demonstrate satire’s Roman provenance.³ Remarkably few commentators on satire have a lot to say about this etymological ambiguity, but eighteenth-century writers at least know that the term’s origins are unsettled, and so—by extension—is its basic connotation.

² See Griffin, Satire, 25.
³ For Dryden’s discussion of the etymology of “satire,” see A Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire, in Works, 4, especially pp. 28-29.
Eighteenth-century commentators are uncertain about what “satire” means; neither do they agree about what satire is like. Terminology is an insoluble problem, as no clear-cut or consistent boundaries exist between related concepts (e.g., raillery, lampoon, libel). Some writers make distinctions without necessarily ranking the various forms: Sir Thomas Pope Blount’s *De Re Poetica: or, Remarks upon Poetry* (1694), for example, includes sections on satire, burlesque, lampoon, and farce. More commonly, writers emphatically differentiate between and evaluate two or more kindred terms. Richard Flecknoe (1658) offers a spectrum of kinds of mockery, from raillery (the most good-natured) to jesting to jeering to “satyr” (the most objectionable). The author of *Some Critical and Politick Remarks On a Late Virulent Lampoon, Call’d Faction Display’d* (1704) stresses “the difference betwixt a fine Satyrist, and a blunt Railer” (12): the latter is one who attacks personal defects, names individuals, or otherwise engages in slanderous defamation rather than “true” and “just” satire. Both of these writers separate satire from raillery, but they have exactly antonymous views of the two terms. Flecknoe sees raillery as the mildest and most innocuous form of ridicule and satire as vile calumny; the 1704 author argues the reverse, defining raillery as an abomination and satire as a praiseworthy corrective. In 1744, Corbyn Morris discusses the principles that should govern “wit, humour, raillery, satire, and ridicule,” systematically expounding the considerable distinctions between them. For example:

*Raillery*, and *Satire*, are extremely different; 1. *Raillery*, is a genteel poignant Attack of slight Foibles and Oddities; *Satire* a witty and severe Attack of mischievous Habits and Vices. 2. The Intention of *Raillery*, is to procure your Pleasure, by exposing the little Embarrassment of a Person; But the Intention of *Satire*, is to raise your Detestation, by exposing the real Deformity of his Vices. 3. If in *Raillery* the Sting be given too deep and severe, it will sink into Malice and Rudeness, And your Pleasure will not be justifiable; But *Satire*, the more deep and severe the Sting of it is, will be the more excellent; Its Intention being entirely to root out and destroy the Vice. 4. It is a just Maxim upon these Subjects, that in *Raillery* a good-natur’d Esteem ought always to appear, without any Resentment or Bitterness; In *Satire* a generous free Indignation, without any sneaking Fear or Tenderness; It being a sort of partaking in the Guilt to keep any Terms with Vices.  

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4. *Enigmaticall Characters, All Taken to the Life, from Severall Persons, Humours, & Dispositions* (1658).
Because satire should be biting, Morris explains, Juvenal is “greatly superior” to Horace. But, he continues, this judgment is not entirely fair, because “many of the short Compositions of Horace, which are indiscriminately ranged together, under the general Name of Satires, are not properly such, but Pieces of Raillery or Ridicule” (51). That Horace the satirist is often not actually writing satire is an odd contention, but the crux is that Morris attempts to demonstrate at some length substantive differences between related types of writing.

Not everyone discriminates. A number of commentators appear entirely indifferent to this sort of classification. The anonymous *A Discourse on Ridicule* and Richard Blackmore’s “Upon Wit” (both 1716) treat satire, raillery, and ridicule as synonymous terms, as does the author of *Laugh upon Laugh, or Laughter Ridicul’d* (1740; 1s): “Mine is pure, honest, manly Satyre— / Judge Those who know best of the Matter. / I own indeed ’tis Ridicule” (32). The point is inconsistency: terms that some critics view as crucially and indubitably antonymous, these authors casually regard as comparable or even interchangeable. Such nomenclatural discrepancies are annoying and disconcerting, but they tell us something significant about contemporary attitudes: never from 1650 to 1770 do writers employ a common vocabulary about satire, and neither does the vocabulary evolve in clear and distinct ways.

**Definition by contrast**

Few writers specify what they understand satire to be, but a fair number do assert what satire is not. “Invectives,” asserts the author of *The Law Corrupted; a Satire* (1706), “are not to be allow’d the Title of Satire” (Preface). In *The Tatler*, No. 92, Steele likewise emphasizes the disparity between “real” satire and libel. Although these terms have been “promiscuously joined together in the Notions of the Vulgar,” he argues,

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6 The author of *Biographia Classica: The Lives and Characters of all the Classic Authors... With An Historical and Critical Account of Them and their Writings*, 2 vols. (1740) distinguishes between old and new satire (Horace and Juvenal), and suggests the limits of Horatian satire: “Horace was a slight superficial Satirist, who only laugh’d from the Teeth outward, whereas Juvenal bit to the very Bone, and did not often suffer his Prey to escape strangling and being put to death” (1:301).

7 Blackmore’s essay is in his *Essays upon Several Subjects. In Five Parts*, 2nd edn. (1716).
the Satyrist and Libeller differ as much as the Magistrate and the Murderer. In the Consideration of human Life, the Satyrist never falls upon Persons who are not glaringly faulty, and the Libeller on none but who are conspicuously commendable.  

Along the same lines, the writer of *Ars Punica* (1721; 6d) insists that slanderous statements are not to be mistaken for satire: “Satire never attacks the Character or Reputation of any Man; to do this, is the Province of defamation, between which and Satire, there is as wide a difference, as between the Primitive Christians and the Modern inferior Clergy.” Implicit in these remarks is the belief that “real” satire involves more controlled and considered judgments than are to be found in crude insults.

Some critics are more specific about what satire is not, though their judgments often have less to do with general principle than with revulsion against particular works and writers. In *The Characters and Conduct of Sir John Edgar* (1720; 6d), John Dennis passionately contends that a string of now celebrated “satires” are only satiric impostures, complaining that

we have had no just Satire in England, since the Author of *Hudibras* publish’d his, which seems to me, to be a very just one on Hypocrisy. . . . We have since had Libels which have pass’d for Satires, as *Absalom and Achitophel*, the *Medal*, *Mac Fleckno*, and the *Dispensary*. They are indeed, if you please, beautiful Libels, but they are every where full of Flattery or Slander, and a just Satire admits of neither. In the two first, how many were abus’d only for being true to the Religion and Liberties of their Country? And on the other side, some were extoll’d only for being false to both. The attempt to lessen *Shadwell* in *Mackfleckno*, is every whit as unworthy of Satire. For *Shadwell* pretended to no Species of Poetry but the Comick, in which he was certainly very much superior to *Dryden*; as the latter acknowledges by a very fair implication in his *Preface* to the *State of Innocence*, which was writ before the Quarrel between them began. The business of Sir *Samuel Garth* in his *Dispensary* was to expose much better Physicians than himself, for no other reason but because they were not of his Opinion in the affair of the *Dispensary*. Now tho’ these were Libels, and very injurious, yet the Authors justly thought it more creditable to suffer them to be publish’d without any Name, rather than to make use of false ones.

Dennis of course has his own axe to grind, but his comment is nonetheless interesting. He flatly denies the label of “satire,” for example, to the three major verse satires written by Dryden, regarded by modern

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9 *Ars Punica. Pars Altera. or, Truth Vindicated from the Misrepresentations of the Dean of Worcester* (1721), 7.
scholars as the preeminent “Augustan” satirist. He sharply differentiates libel and satire, and asserts—more heatedly than the authors of *The Law Corrupted* and *Ars Punica*—that the latter should be made of nobler stuff.\footnote{Or, as Ned Ward says in *Durgen. Or, a Plain Satyr upon a Pompous Satyrist* (1729): “Pers’nal Reflections, Men of Art must own, / Cease to be Satyr, and become Lampoon” (12).}

Insofar as “concepts” of satire can be extracted from eighteenth-century commentary, what we find is (a) often irrelevant to satiric practice, and (b) decidedly inconsistent. Much of what we now regard as satire and what was then labeled “satire” is—according to the attitudes and assertions of the writers I have been citing—illegitimate and unworthy of the title. By the standards of many writers, works like *Mac Flecknoe* and *The Dunciad* are hardly the satiric exemplars of the long eighteenth century: properly understood, they are not even *satires*. More important for my purposes is the fact that contemporary notions about satire are imprecise and contradictory. The opinions sometimes intersect, especially in the realm of bland abstractions, but they do not add up to uniformity. Although Fredric V. Bogel sees in the eighteenth century a “deep commitment to a particular idea of satire,”\footnote{Bogel, *The Difference Satire Makes*, 258.} contemporary commentary reflects nothing of the sort.

II. The business of satire

“The Beggers Opera hath knockt down Gulliver, I hope to see Popes Dullness knock down the Beggers Opera, but not till it hath fully done its Jobb.” (Swift to Gay; 28 March 1728)

Concepts of satire are hard to separate from its perceived objectives. When people discuss what they think satire is or is not, they are almost always talking in terms of what satire can or cannot and should or should not do. Those who condemn satire outright suppose that it serves no legitimate purpose; those who approve of satire—with or without qualifications—believe that it has social and/or moral utility. Concepts of satire, however, are almost always general and nebulous. Statements about the “business” or
“job” of satire (the negative or positive results it produces) tend to be more explicitly particular. On what
grounds do writers reject satire, and on what grounds do others sanction and even celebrate it?

The opposition to satire

Negative responses to satire take at least two different forms in the period under review: (1) attacks on
satire as malicious and (2) worried objections to satire as a threat to sober reasoning. As always, we need
to recognize variation under all broad headings.

(1) Satire is mean-spirited attack. Dictionary entries from the beginning to the end of the period
call attention to satire’s negative attributes. A number of lexicographers, including Samuel Johnson,
define satire as libel, slander, or defamation. An especially good early example is Josua Poole’s colorful
catalogue of adjectives for “Satyre” (1657):

Girding, biting, snarling, scourging, jerking, lashing, smarting, sharp, tart, rough,
invective, censorious, currish, snappish, captious, barking, brawling, carping, fanged,
sharp-tooth’d, quipping, jeering, flouting, sullen, rigid, impartial, whipping, thorny,
pricking, stinging, sharp-fanged, injurious, reproachful, libellous, harsh, rough-hewne,
odious, opprobrious, contumelious, defaming, calumnious

Identification of satire with aggression is familiar enough that a few examples will suffice. Flecknoe
construes satire as “rude Assault” (30), and other later seventeenth-century commentators also emphasize
the satirist’s tendency toward peevishness and derision. Throughout the long eighteenth century, of
course, those targeted by particular satires are perhaps readiest of all to object to satire’s abusiveness.
Responses to the various versions of Pope’s Dunciad are notoriously indignant about “King Pope’s”
pointless denunciation of undistinguished poets. His incensed dunces reply virtually en masse, decrying
their attacker as a bad-tempered beast and at least implicitly rejecting the notion of satire as morally and
socially constructive. Victims are not the only cavilers: a number of seemingly “neutral” critics complain
about satire’s malignity. But, as I believe this chapter will demonstrate, that objection has been

13 Poole, The English Parnassus: or, A Helpe to English Poesie (1657), 176.
14 See, for example, the anonymous Raillerie a la mode Consider’d: or, the Supercilious Detractor (1673)
and Richard Allestree’s The Government of the Tongue (1667). The latter complains about the “fault of the Tongue”
that is mockery, “the striving to render others as ridiculous and contemptible as we can” (113).
overemphasized in modern scholarship. A comparatively small number of writers deprecate satire wholesale as vicious attack. Most either qualify their disapproval—claiming that while satire could be misused, it can also be of value—or demur on other grounds.

(2) Satire threatens sober judgment. Those who associate satire with malicious aggression often indict the satirist based on his or her treatment of particular targets, complaining that the satirist needlessly hurts feelings or injures the innocent. Enemies of satire in this second category, however, often take it as a more general threat: satire is a type of laughter/wit/mirth that by its very nature endangers the core values of society.

Some commentators bemoan and condemn the burgeoning vogue for “laughter.” Joseph Glanvill’s *A Blow at Modern Sadducism* (1668) includes “Reflections on Drollery, and Atheisme.” That section title alone suggests a curious association of ideas, at least to the modern reader, but the relationship between humor and skepticism is at the heart of Glanvill’s impassioned critique of both. The two terms intersect in the concept of “scoffing,” which for someone like Glanvill implies both mockery and irreverence. Glanvill recounts a famed “disturbance”—a supernatural sighting—and then complains about the incredulity with which the story has been regarded. The reasons that men do not believe the truth, he explains, “are chiefly, I think, an affected humour of DROLLERY, and Scoffing, and a worse cause, ATHEISM.” Describing the underlying problem, Glanvill explains that, in the humorist,

*reason* becomes an obedient servant to his *fancy*. He makes himself *believe*, by those *arguments*, that at first were intended only to make him *laugh*, and in the end, concludes in *earnest*, that there is neither *Witch*, nor *Apparition*: and ‘tis well if he stop there. Now these, Sir, are the WITS (if we will believe them) and their admirers take every *jest* for an *argument*, and a *loud laugh* upon an idle tale of a *Devil*, or a *Witch*, for a *demonstration* of the *non-existence* of such beings. And thus the *humour* propagates, And SADDUCISM is the *Fashion*. Nor is this all, but by the same method every thing that is *sacred*, or *serious* hath been exposed, and both *Government*, and *Religion* made the objects of idle, and phantastic *buffoonry*. (166-67)

By such “*darling entertainments*” as laughter encourages, “the mind is made incapable of *serious* and *deep reflections*” (168). This kind of sportive wit—“the most *pestilent* enemy to *knowledge*”—is to be feared, Glanvill gravely concludes, because, while “*Philosophy* can shame, and disable all the *reasons* that can be urged against it,” the “*jests*, and *loud laughter* are not to be *confuted*” (175).
Satirical depreciation is hard to combat. Like Glanvill, the Anglican clergyman Clement Ellis is disturbed by ridicule’s ability to shake the pillars of faith. His *The Vanity of Scoffing* (1674) is a slashing critique of satirical wits, but it is also—and most importantly—a dire warning to his co-religionists. Of the taunting blasphemers, he says the following:

The *bravery* of such men is to set their faces against the Heavens, and bid defiance to *him* that made them. . . . they are resolved to teach [the world] if they can to believe blindly what themselves cannot believe, that *there is no God, no Heaven, no Hell, no life after death, no Soul to be saved or damned, neither punishment nor reward to be expected in a future world.* Now if any man be so unmannerly as to require some *proof* of all this, some *probable* reasons at least why he should believe things so repugnant to the common opinions of the world; they will *swear* it stoutly, *swagger* it out bravely, call all men *fools, talk all, hear nothing, scrible something, ask questions, propound some possibilities;* and when this is done, and some *Satyrical* strains of wit, to close all, lavished out on those, who dare *believe* the things which these men are most *afraid* of. (8-9)

Ellis adjures his devout readers “not to be *jeared* and *Hector’d,* not to be *scar’d* out of all our wits at once with this uncouth noise, nor affrighted out of our *old Faith* with some dazling *flashes* of this new-fashioned wit” (9). He urges them not to be browbeaten by “*Satyrical*” wits—but the virulence of his exhortation bespeaks anxiety about the threat mockery poses to belief.

Enthusiasm for laughter and ridicule undermines restrained moderation: society has to eschew the former in order to preserve the latter. Those who give in to this “smart *Itch of Writing* and *Replying* in this *New Canting Drolling Way,*” warns the author of *Raillerie a la mode Consider’d* (1673), have “licentiously let go the *Rains* of his *Sobriety, Reason,* and *Religion,* to play at Have at All” (7). He frowns upon the “*shameless incivility*” of calumnious mockery, but his disapproval is categorically different from those who censure the satirist as spiteful (19). This author’s animated account of nefarious derogation is blistering. The detractor

out-Huff’s Hell, out-Hectors Beelzebub, and can dispence with the Name of *Atheist,* if he be not proud on’t, and openly own and glory in it. This is one that with little *Fear,* and less *Wit,* will still be at his *Ludere cum Sacris;* that dare be impudent with Heaven, and sawcy with its most awful Majesty, to the Hearers astonishment, and his own shameful confusion; that, like an over-daring *Vaulter,* will forsooth be shewing the *tricks* of Activity upon the very Brink and Precipice of *Hell;* and play at Hide and Seek with the *Devil* himself, till at last he catches him in his Clutches, as the Cat does her wanton Prey, and so spoiles his Sport on a suddain. (13-14)
Such a man “is Traytor to Truth, a Lying Oracle, or the Old Devil of Delphos, to Abuse the Credulous, Delude the Ignorant, Confirm the Suspicious, and Inflame the Jealous,” and a “Monster among Men, and hath a double Face, a double Heart, and a cloven Tongue” (55-56). Like Glanvill, this anonymous haranguer associates a certain species of mockery and mirth with the profane: to misuse humor is, in one way or another, *ludere cum sacris*.

This association of mirth and drollery with blasphemy appears again and again in sermons and other religious discourse. Richard Allestree (*The Government of the Tongue*, 1667) and Isaac Barrow (*Several Sermons against Evil-Speaking*, 1678) both treat “Atheistical Discourses,” “blasphemous Raillery,” “prophane Swearing,” and “Censoriousness, Detraction, and Slander” as equally offensive vices of the tongue. Allestree explains malice as the primary motive of defamation, and he attributes human malevolence to diabolical inducement: “The Devil here plaies the Artist,” he suggests, and he clearly means quite literally that the detractor has been lured by demonic forces into wicked abuse of his fellow humans (54). Barrow emphatically deprecates profane Jesting, all speaking loosely and wantonly about Holy things, (things nearly related to God and Religion,) making such things the matters of sport and mockery, playing and trifling with them, is certainly prohibited, as an intolerably-vain and wicked practice. It is an infallible sign of a vain and light spirit, which considereth little, and cannot distinguish things. (61-62)

Unrestrained revelry is at odds with due reverence. In a ponderous diatribe against excessive laughter—*Mirth’s Madness* (1702)—the Christian moralist Edward Grove cautions his co-religionists to “be on our Guard” against the “heinous” allurements of gaiety, and he defends the wholesome satisfactions of sobriety. Grove insists that he and his Christian readers should “not Delight in the vanity of Mirth and Laughter, nor be given over wholly to the Life of Drollery of Fools and Ideots,” but that we rather would be serious and full of thought, Dedicated to Holy and Pious Speculations, to grave and useful Conferences, to a daily Communing with our own Heart, and in our Chamber silently, to a State of Holy and Heavenly mindedness, and to

15 The quotations come from “The Publisher to the Reader” note in Barrow’s *Sermons*. In 1694, Daniel Burgess also publishes a sermon on *Foolish Talking and Jesting*, and five years later John Sergeant—like Glanvill and Barrow in particular—connects railing with skepticism and atheism. See *Raillery Defeated by Calm Reason: or, the New Cartesian Method of Arguing and Answering Expos’d* (1699).
an active, but not over-light and frolicksome Degree of passing the appointed time of our Sojourning here in God’s fear, and of putting our selves every day more and more into a fitness, and sober Capacity for those most solid Pleasures at GOD’s Right Hand provided for us.\(^{16}\)

Indulgent laughter signifies daftness at best, and, at worst, desecration.

Wholesale condemnation of laughter is far less common than more moderate warnings about its misapplication—its misuse on subjects worthy of serious treatment. In an oft-quoted passage from the *Spectator*, Addison observes that ridicule could be potentially good and useful, but that unfortunately it is now “generally made use of to laugh Men out of Virtue and good Sense, by attacking everything that is Solemn and Serious, Decent and Praise-worthy in Human Life.”\(^{17}\) Addison shares something with earlier critics of misguided ridicule, though with the crucial difference that he would not—as they often did—associate mockery with evil-speaking literally conceived. In “Upon Wit,” Blackmore comes closer to recalling Glavill and Barrow, contending that

> It would be endless to innumerate the various Ways which the atheistical Wit and merry Libertine employ, to take off all Veneration of Religion, and expose its Adherents to publick Derision. This is certainly the greatest Abuse of Wit imaginable. In all the Errors and monstrous Productions of Nature, can any appear more deform’d than a Man of Parts, who employs his admirable Qualities in bringing Piety into Contempt, putting Vertue to the Blush, and making Sobriety of Manners the common Subject of his Mirth; while with Zeal and Industry, he propagates the malignant Contagion of Vice and Irreligion, poisons his Friends and Admirers, and promotes the destruction of his native Country? And if these foolish Wits and ingenious Madmen could reflect, they would soon be convinc’d, that while they are ingag’d against Religion they hurt themselves; and that Wit and Humour thus misapply’d, will prove but a wretched Compensation for their want of Vertue. (14-15)

Blackmore objects not to “wit” but to perversions of wit. Those who misemploy their talents for ridicule are deluded—incapable of reflection—and dangerous.

The disparagement of ridicule often includes at least an implicit defense of sobriety, which has (these critics lament) been rendered unfashionable by the popularity of wit. They worry about the

\(^{16}\) *Grove, Mirth’s Madness, or, the Vanity of Mens Laughter, and of Their Merry Amusements in their Idle Hours. Consider’d in a Sermon Upon Ecclesiastes*, 2, Epistle Dedicatory, 8.

dangers of sporting with serious subjects, though they often disagree about what those subjects are or on what terms they can be mocked. A rudimentary spectrum of opinion might have at one end those who are untroubled by laughter and at the other those like Grove who are wholly intolerant of it. At intervals between the two would be the positions held by Blackmore (endorsing wit but cautioning against its abuse) and by Barrow (objecting to wit but admitting its occasional necessity/utility). Much of this material is clearly outside “literary” realms, but it does represent a substantial part of the negative response to satire. It signifies not aversion to satiric spitefulness, but instead a widespread social unease with satire.

The case for satire

Objections to satire and to particular satires in this period are many, and sometimes violently expressed. As Elkin has demonstrated, eighteenth-century satirists often felt forced to justify their enterprises, and so issued boilerplate apologias with monotonous regularity. He highlights the defensive tone of such self-promotion, explaining the “core of the defense” to be the assurance of satire’s moral function. The “orthodox viewpoint of the Augustan critics,” Elkin decrees, “was that literature aims to instruct its readers at the same time as it delights them.” The conclusion is compelling, but it is also incomplete. Not all explanations of purpose are necessarily “defensive,” though following Elkin modern scholars almost always read them as such. Far from illustrating a uniform and “orthodox” perspective, eighteenth-

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18 Similarly, the author of The Scholar’s Manual . . . Design’d for Establishing and Promoting Christian Principles . . . in Irreligious and Sceptical Times (1733) devotes a section of his reflections to arguing that “Railery and Satire” are “Enemies to just Thinking,” and that, though all wit is not contemptible, the iniquitous use of wit “is contrary to Religion, Government, and Good Manners” (Table of Contents). And the author of Candour: Or, An Occasional Essay on the Abuse of Wit and Eloquence (1739) opens his poem with an attack on satire, which has “a publick Grievance grown,” because the satirist neither “spares the Altar, nor reveres the Throne” (3).

19 Unlike Grove, Barrow approves of wit in some circumstances. Grove denounces those who disparage sobriety, whereas Barrow suggests a more realistic way for “sober” people to get along in a “jocular Age”: “It may also be expedient to put the world out of conceit, that all sober and good men are a sort of such lumpish or sour people, that they can utter nothing but flat and drowzy stuff; by shewing them, that such persons, when they see cause . . . can be as brisk and smart as themselves; when they please, can speak pleasantly and wittily as well as gravely and judiciously” (Several Sermons against Evil-Speaking, 42, 57).

century commentators have very different notions about what satire is good for and very different motivations for insisting on its utility.

(1) The value of laughter. Whereas writers like Glanvill, Barrow, and Blackmore warn about the hazards inherent in merriment and levity, others proclaim the pleasing necessity of laughter. The full title of *Mirth in Abundance* (1659), a collection of “Jests,” announces its author’s hopes that the book will “relieve the Melancholy,” “rejoyce the Merry,” “expell sorrow,” and “advance Jollity.” It also assures readers that the works included, despite their gaiety, are entirely “free from Rayling Baudery, Blasphemy, or Incivility”—clearly anticipating the accusations of or concerns about mirth-as-profanity (à la Glanvill). Although laughter (satirical or otherwise) has its enemies in the long eighteenth century, not everyone believes that it represents a threat to society, state, and religion. Writers commend humor as an indispensable “antidote to melancholy” and as a requisite part of human society. At least one commentator endorses it not because it is a necessary corrective or *elixir vitæ*, but because it is basically harmless. The author of *Sensus Communis: An Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour* (1709), in a “letter to a friend,” explains why he is untroubled by the proliferation of humor as a mode of disputation:

But let who will condemn the Humour: For my own part, I am in no such apprehension from this sceptical kind of Wit. Men indeed may, in a serious way, be so wrought on, and confounded, by different Modes of Opinion, different Systems and Schemes impos’d by Authority, that they may wholly lose all Notion or Comprehension of Truth. I can easily apprehend what Effect Awe has over Mens Understandings. I can very well suppose Men may be frighted out of their Wits: But I have no apprehension they shou’d be laugh’d out of ’em. I can have no suspicion that in a pleasant way they shou’d be talk’d out of their Love for Society, or reason’d out of common Sense. A mannerly Wit can hurt no Cause that I am concern’d for. (53-54)

This piece is technically a “defense” of satire, but its tone is not really “defensive.” Other examples of a similar position include *Meditations of the Mirth of a Christian Life. And the Vaine Mirth of a Wicked Life, with the Sorrowes of it* (Oxford: 1653); *The Rule of Rejoycing; or, a Direction for Mirth. in a Sermon Preached upon Trinity-Sunday* (1671); and *Wit and Mirth, an Antidote against Melancholy*, 3rd edn. (1682).

John Brown takes a similar (though not identical) position, refusing to condemn either jollity or sobriety wholesale. He maintains that “Mirth and Gravity are both harmless Things, provided they be properly applied: And we have seen that it is the Province of Reason alone, to determine when they are so.” See the “Essay on Ridicule considered as a Test of Truth,” in his *Essays on the Characteristics* (1751; 5e†), 69.
The value of attack. Not all affirmations of satire’s value are founded upon sodden pledges to advocate virtue and discountenance vice. Some commentators admit that satire is in essence obloquy, but they do so sans Elkin’s requisite apologia. In *The Muses Looking-Glass; (or, The Stage Re-View’d.) A Comedy* (1706), Thomas Randolph maintains that punitive exposure of targets can be effective precisely because of its sting. The character “Satyre” speaks

As one whose Whip of Steel can with a Lash
Imprint the Characters of Shame so deep,
Even in the brazen Forehead of proud Sin,
That not Eternity shall wear it out.
When I but frown’d in my *Lucilius* Brow,
Each conscious Cheek grew Red, and a cold trembling
Freez’d the chill Soul; while every guilty Breast
Stood fearful of Dissection, as afraid
To be anatomiz’d by that skilful Hand;
And have each Artery, Nerve, and Vein of Sin
By it laid open to the publocal Scorn.
I have untruss’d the proudest; greatest Tyrants
Have quak’d below my powerful Whip, half dead
With Expectation of the smarting Jerk,
Whose Wound no Salve can cure: each blow doth leave
A lasting Scar, that with a Poyson eats
Into the Marrow of their Fames and Lives;
Th’ eternal Ulcer to their Memories! (9)

Randolph does not reiterate or recall Dryden’s assertion of satire’s noble aims: when “Satyre” describes how even the “greatest Tyrants” have to fear the lash and its attendant public humiliation, he is relishing the lasting effects of witty castigation.\(^ {23} \) A 1740 poet likewise celebrates satire’s capacity to shame its targets—it is “that Rod / Men sometimes fear who fear not God” (*Laugh upon Laugh*, p. 32). These two poets commend satire—but not on moral grounds.

Ridicule as argumentative instrument. Ridicule becomes a hotly disputed topic in the wake of Shaftesbury’s famous assertion that it is an incomparably valuable test of truth. From 1708

\(^ {23} \) John Oldham makes a similar point in the prologue to his *Satyrs upon the Jesuits* (1679-81). He suggests that “mild fruitless methods” should be abandoned, because only “pointed Satyr” can do any good in attacks on Jesuits of hardened consciences. His attack will be harsh: “Red hot with vengeance thus, I’ll brand disgrace / So deep, no time shall e’re the marks deface” (ll. 25, 26, 61-62). In the “Advertisement” to the *Satyrs*, Oldham warns his readers that he will not offer the customary “Discourse of the Original, Progress, and Rules of Satyr,” and neither will he demonstrate “that he has lately Read *Casaubon.*” He is, he says, “minded to wave it, as a vanity he is in no wise fond of.” *The Poems of John Oldham*, ed. Harold F. Brooks (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 3.
(Shaftesbury’s *Letter Concerning Enthusiasm*) through the mid-century, commentators of all stripes argue about the nature and utility of ridicule. Although James Sutherland states confidently that, “It was a favourite idea of the eighteenth century that ridicule is the test of truth,” not all of Shaftesbury’s contemporaries concurred with his assessment. Just as late seventeenth-century writers had execrated mirth as a menace to sobriety, so many authors in these years abominate ridicule. In a 1734 sermon, John Tottie grumbles that “nothing has done or can do our Religion greater harm than *Ridicule*.” Echoing the author of *Raillerie a la mode Consider’d*, Tottie worries that “an Inclination to *Ridicule* is apt to lead Men off from any Serious enquiries at all.” In his painstaking response to Shaftesbury, John Brown concludes that reason trumps ridicule: “REASON alone is the Detector of Falsehood, and the TEST OF TRUTH,” and, whatever the possible uses of ridicule, reason “remains the superior and corrective Power.”

Ridicule, however, has its partisans. In 1731, William Asplin highlights the possibility for “the Sober Use of a Rational Ridicule”—words which, he says, will be taken by many “as a Contradiction, it being a Sort of Vulgar Error, that *REASON* and *RIDICULE* are Things of a quite different nature, and inconsistent with each other.” But, Asplin argues,

> if duly consider’d, true and just *Ridicule* will appear to be one of the finest and politest Species of *Reasoning*, being no other than *Argumentum ex Absurdo*, a Topick which the greatest Logicians in all Ages have recommended to others, and had recourse to themselves.

Far from being a threat to reason, ridicule is a sound form of argumentation. Other writers go further, claiming ridicule to be an infinitely more effective tool than unmitigated reprimand. The author of *A*

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25 Tottie, *Ridicule, so far as it Affects Religion, Consider’d and Censur’d. A Sermon Preached before the University of Oxford*, 4, 6. Whitehead takes a similar position, voicing his concern—if less gravely than Tottie—that ridicule works against religious belief and truth: “Each laughing murders what he holds most dear” (*Essay on Ridicule*, 6).

26 Brown, “*Essay on Ridicule*,” 41, 47.

27 Asplin, *Alkibla, Part II. or, the Disquisition Upon Worshiping towards the East . . . To which are prefix’d Some Thoughts . . . Concerning the proper Use of Ridicule in Controversies stil’d Religions* (1731), xi. A year later, James Foster rejects this position, sternly bidding that his readers “always take care to distinguish between *reasoning* and *ridicule*.” See *Sermons on the Following Subjects, viz. Of the universal sense of good and evil . . . The nature, folly, and danger of scoffing at religion*, 2nd edn. (1733), 440.
Discourse on Ridicule (1716) asserts its value, though not without qualification: “Ridicule if it be charitably designed, and seasonably and skillfully apply’d, may be allowed sometimes as a Means of reclaiming Men from their Vices, and their Sins, when serious Reproof, and grave Advice cannot attain that End” (11; emphasis added). The writer judiciously suggests that the careful exercise of mild humor (laughter “duly govern’d”) is likelier to be heard and heeded than is sober admonition. Ridicule is justified by its positive capabilities, but it is “useful” also, and never more so than when it is accompany’d with Facetiousness, and Wit: It may be useful for the Correction, or Prevention of those Follies of our Neighbors, which Nothing else perhaps can so effectually amend, or prevent. Nay, even the grosser Vices of Mankind, may sometimes be cured this Way, when grave Instructions, and severe Reproof, can make no Sort of Impression upon them. (7)

Despite the author’s stated desire to “amend” human behavior, this is in fact far removed from the naïve or high-flown trumpeting of satire’s consecrated powers. The writer does not simply assert reformative potentiality. Improvement is possible but not certain, and it requires a particular type of mockery—teasing amiability rather than sniping condescension.

(4) The moral function. The most “defensive” of the positive rationales for satire are the clichés about its moral utility. Dryden and Mulgrave’s acclamation of satire as “the boldest way, if not the best, / To tell men freely of their foulest faults” and Pope’s apostrophe to satire—“O sacred Weapon!”—are hardly representative of the period’s satirical personae (much less the actual attitude), but neither are they anomalies.29 The author of The Law Corrupted holds that, “The Business of Satire . . . is to lash Vice to the Encouragement of Vertue” (Preface).30 Morris also insists that the object of satire is “to scourge Vice, and to deliver it up to your just Detestation” (37). Primarily defensive in tone and purpose, these apologias are basically pro forma boilerplate.

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28 In An Essay on Ridicule (1753; s 6df), Allan Ramsay also maintains that a “true philosopher, that is, a man of candour, sense and knowledge, has a better chance than ordinary of improving the understandings of those with whom he converses, at the very instant he makes them laugh” (82).

29 Essay upon Satire (wr. 1679), ll. 12-13; Epilogue to the Satires (1738), Dialogue II, l. 212.

30 See also A Grammar of the English Tongue, With Notes, Giving the Grounds and Reason of Grammar in General, 2nd edn. (1712): “Satire and Comedy being both directed to lash and ridicule Folly and Vice . . .” (146).
If satire is defended on the grounds that it can do some good, then for whose good is it meant? Very few of even the staunchest supporters of satire express the hopes that the target will be reformed, and those who do suggest that possibility see the targets only as secondary beneficiaries. If the “victim” does feel sufficiently bad—or embarrassed—to mend his or her ways, that is to the good, but the more realistic expectation is that the audience will be reformed or deterred from misbehavior. Defending himself against Jeremy Collier’s attack (1698), William Congreve reasons that the satirical presentation of mistakes and misdeeds could have positive effect on two different types of audience members: “as vicious People are made ashamed of their Follies or Faults, by seeing them expos’d in a ridiculous manner, so are good People at once both warned and diverted at their Expence.” Following a similar logic, the author of *A Grammar of the English Tongue* (1712) likens satirists to doctors, arguing that both “propose themselves to the Health of the Patient,” and that the satirist’s medicine can “correct the Perverse, and deter others from falling into Folly and Vice” (147). Satire is more likely to be an effective disincentive than an incentive—that is, it will discourage potential offenders rather than positively influence those targeted by the attack.

A number of commentators do not so much as mention the target. Although Barrow worries mightily about the abuse of wit, he also insists that “Facetiousnesse” can serve as the most proper instrument of exposing apparently base and vile to due contempt. It is many times expedient, that things really ridiculous should appear such, that they may be sufficiently loathed and shunned; and to render them such is the part of a facetious wit, and usually can only be compassed thereby. When to impugn them with downright reason, or to check them by serious discourse, would signify nothing; then representing them in a shape strangely-ugly to the fancy . . . may eventually discountenance them. (49)

The point of ridicule, as Barrow understands it, is not the victim’s mortification and subsequent alteration. In *De Re Poetica*—essentially a compilation of other thinkers—Blount recycles a number of platitudes about satire. He quotes Dryden frequently, and also Rapin, who proclaims, “That the Principal End of *Satyr*, is to instruct the People by discrediting *Vice*” (42). The “People” refers not to the butts of the satire

31 Congreve, *Amendments of Mr. Collier’s False and Imperfect Citations, &c. From the Old Batchelour, Double Dealer, Love for Love, Mourning Bride. By the Author of those Plays* (1698), 8.
but to potential butts of future satires—the audience who can yet save themselves from similar ignominy. A much later advocate of this kind of satire is Henry Fielding, whose stated preference for instruction via example rather than precept is often cited. In the 10 June 1740 issue of *The Champion*, Fielding hails William Hogarth as one of the most useful Satyrists any Age hath produced. In his excellent Works you see the delusive Scene expos’d with all the Force of Humour, and on casting your Eyes on another Picture, you behold the dreadful and fatal Consequence. I almost dare affirm that those two Works of his, which he calls the Rake’s and the Harlot’s Progress, are calculated more to serve the Cause of Virtue, and for the Preservation of Mankind, than all the Folio’s of Morality which have been ever written. . . . Can there be a more instructive Lesson against that abominable and pernicious Vice, Ambition, than the Sight of a mean Man, rais’d by fortunate Accidents and execrable Vices to Power, employing the basest Measures and the vilest Instruments to support himself; looked up to only by Sycophants and Slaves and sturdy Beggars, Wretches whom even he must in his Heart despise in all their Tinsel, looked down upon and scorned and shunned by every Man of Honour, nay, by every Man of Sense, and those whom his rotten rancorous Heart must in Spite of himself reluctantly admire; who knows that he is justly hated by his whole Country, who sees and feels his Danger; tottering, shaking, trembling; without Appetite for his Dainties, without Ability for his Women, without Taste for his Elegancies, without Dignity in his Robes, without Honour from his Titles, without Authority from his Power, and without Ease in his Palace, or Repose in his Bed of Down. If such an Idea can make us nauseate Ambition, I believe if we turn over the Pages of our History we shall find such Examples.

The satirist, according to this account, should teach people to be “sensible of the Contempt a Man justly incurs” by his wrongdoing.32 That satire can instruct or warn its audience through negative and/or positive examples is an oft-repeated maxim—what is surprising is that reformation of the target is, for most contemporary commentators, at best a peripheral concern.

(5) *Satire as persuasion/education of allies*. Not all satirists understood themselves to be addressing their enemies. Defoe, for example, uses satire to instruct and persuade—but not in the way modern scholars tend to think of satirical instruction and persuasion. “The End of Satyr,” Defoe affirms in the preface to *A New Discovery of an Old Intreague* (1693), “ought to be exposing Falshood.” In the preface to his *Reformation of Manners* (1702), he issues a similarly hackneyed mission statement, asserting that, “The aim of Satyr is Reformation.” As clichéd sentiments often expressed by satirists,

these declarations might sound merely self-righteous, but Defoe’s later satires seem to work toward precisely this stated end. The assumption that all expressed justifications for satire are merely defensive apologias is part and parcel with Elkin’s premise that all “satire is hostile by nature” (1). When the latter supposition does not hold—as in the case of Defoe—neither does the former. Despite appearances, Defoe’s proclamations of satire’s positive capabilities are not just versions of the standard satiric defense Elkin describes.

I have argued elsewhere that Defoe the satirist imagines readers who are receptive to the claims of conscience. In More Reformation (1702), his poet explains to personified “Satyr” that he does not hope to reach those who are unreceptive to moral reproach: satire, he suggests, can only “work” for the man who sins “like something of a Christian” (l. 636). Other writers also emphasize the importance of audience to satire, arguing (more broadly than Defoe) that readers and/or viewers of satire must be capable of feeling its sting—or, put differently, that satire is aimed at the guilty. The author of Vanelia: or, the Amours of the Great (1732) has one character insist, for example, that “Satire loses its Force where Men have lost all Shame” (vii). Defoe seems seriously to contemplate the attitude of his audience. His satire is designed and carefully constructed to speak to readers capable of remorse and self-judgment.

Defoe’s aims as a satirist have little to do with attacking or exposing those he disapproves of and much to do with educating a very specific target audience. The readers he addresses in his satire are Christians—dissenting or Low Church Anglicans in particular—who share his basic values. I will discuss his concept and practice of satire at length in chapter 5, but at the moment I want to make a vital distinction. Defoe has plenty of antagonists, and he lashes them throughout his satiric career, but the people for whom he writes are his allies, not his enemies. This represents a notion of satire remote from exposure/reformation-of-target: to mount a soapbox and preach to your moral and/or social enemies is one thing; to warn the group with whom you identify and sympathize about a mutual threat is quite

another. Both are legitimate, if sometimes sanguine, conceptions of satire’s positive functions, but they are worlds apart in practice and purpose.

What does this survey tell us? One conclusion seems especially significant: we should not be fooled by superficial resemblances into neglecting fundamental dissimilarities in viewpoint. The willingness of some—by no means all—satirists to utter high-flown mission statements does not represent an “orthodox” position. Not all of the writers who proclaimed satire’s utility agreed about what it could or should do in practice, or about how its objectives might be realized. We can identify sketchy categories of support for and hostility toward satire (e.g., it can instruct the audience; it is unpleasant and unproductive), but we need also to admit peculiarities (e.g., Horace did not actually write satire) and divergences (e.g., satire is indecorous vs. satire is literally a form of devilry). In other words, we need to appreciate the correspondences—usually in the form of banalities irrelevant to the practice of satire—but also the often drastic discrepancies. Asserting that satire can reform its target is not the same thing as believing that it can deter potential malefactors, and both contrast radically with seeing it as a means of enlightening like-minded readers about a shared enemy. All of these positions are “pro” satire, but they represent three essentially distinct concepts of methods and goals.

III. The practice and province of satire

Statements about what satire does tend to be more specific than those about what satire is, and those about how satire works are often even more precise. A number of writers express opinions about the operational particulars of satire, especially in the realm of method and target. What do contemporary commentators regard as legitimate and illegitimate (or appropriate and inappropriate) satiric techniques and targets? On what grounds do they make their arguments? My objectives in this section are two: (1) to demonstrate the widely discrepant attitudes about what should or should not be done in satire; and (2) to suggest that morality and propriety, while no doubt important categories for many contemporaries, were not the only bases for approbation or condemnation of various methods and targets; a number of writers justified their positions by appeals to efficacy or charges of inefficacy. Contemporary
commentary, then, reflects much disagreement about what satire could and should do—and how, and why, and to whom or what—and about how it might best “work.”

Acceptable and problematical satiric methods
A frequently stated “rule” of satire is that it must be true: sincere reportage constitutes the crucial difference between respectable satire and malicious slander. “Errant falsehood,” contends one commentator, is “no just Satyr.” In his preface, the author of *The Law Corrupted* defends satire (“’tis an Action vertuous to make Examples of Vice”) but demands honest representation (“Reputation is too tender a thing to be insulted by Surmise,” etc.). In one of his many responses to Pope, Dennis admits that he is flaying Pope as personally as Pope flays his targets, but he distinguishes his own (truthful) satire from Pope’s (fallacious) slander. As Dennis explains elsewhere, “That only can be call’d a just Satire, whose Censures are always true; but that which endeavors to decry true Merit, out of Malice, or Passion, or Interest, is in spite of popular Applause a Lampoon, and an infamous Libel.” But at least one writer challenged the dictum that satire be faithful to fact. In *The Art of English Poetry* (1702), Edward Bysshe maintains that, “Satire may be fine, and true Satire, tho’ it be not directly and according to the Letter, true. ’Tis enough that it carry with it a probability or semblance of Truth” (Preface).

Contemporaries disagree about whether satire needs to be true, and also about whether it has to be kind. Unsurprisingly, a number of advocates of satire stipulate that it be delivered in as pleasant a manner as possible. In *De Re Poetica*, Blount paraphrases Rapin’s discouragement of the satirist who lashes too directly, as Juvenal was thought to do: “Satyr that takes off the Mask, and reprehends Vice too openly, is not to be allow’d of” (43). Amiable badinage is preferable to caustic aspersion—a judgment also

35 Dennis, “A True Character of Mr. Pope, and his Writings” (1716), 2:105.
37 James Ralph disagrees, insisting in *The Touch-Stone: or, Historical, Critical, Political, and Theological Essays on the Reigning Diversions of the Town* (1728) that “an open, sincere Countenance” is necessary to tell the “Truths of bold Satire” (106).
asserted by the author of *A Grammar of the English Tongue*, who argues that the medicines of both doctors and satirists

are in themselves unsavory and disagreeable to the Palate of the Distemper’d on whom they make Incisions, whom they cauterize and spare not. The Physician gilds his Pill, that it may go down glibly, the Satiric Invectives must be sweeten’d with the mixture of Pleasantry and Wit, and agreeable Railery, till both the Medicines are swallow’d. (147)38

The statement implies a concern for efficacy as much as for morality or propriety: the “gilded” pills are likelier to be swallowed than more odious forms of medication.39

    A surprising number of commentators think in terms of satiric efficacy. Despite the modern emphasis on “moral defenses,” a lot of responses to ridicule and satire focus not on what is right or wrong, but on what will or will not work (whatever that means). Barrow recognizes that sometimes “sarcastical twitches are needfull to pierce the thick skins of men, to correct their lethargick stupidity, to rouze them out of their drouzy negligence.” “Facetiousness,” to use his term, can be justly and gainfully applied “when plain declarations will not enlighten people, to discern the truth and weight of things, and blunt arguments will not penetrate, to convince or persuade them to their duty” (50). Although in Barrow’s account the satirist must pass judgments heavier than “plain declarations,” he must also take care when he does so:

        you must not chide them as their master, but you may gibe with them as their companion. . . . Most men are of that temper; and particularly the Genius of divers persons, whose opinions and practices we should strive to correct, doth require not a grave and severe, but a free and merry way of treating them. For what can be more unsuitable and unpromising, then to seem serious with those who are not so themselves, or demure with the scornfull? If we design either to please or vex them into better manners, we must be as sportfull in a manner, or as contemptuous as themselves. If we mean to be heard by them, we must talk in their own fashion, with humour and jollity: if we will instruct them, we must withall somewhat divert them: we must seem to play with them, if

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38 See also “Satire,” in *Moral and Critical Reflections on Several Subjects* (1758): “The Satirist who really intends to benefit Mankind by making them ashamed of their Vices and their Follies, should mingle Honey with his Gall. He may attack the Disease with the Strength of a Lion, but he should treat the Patient with the Tenderness of a Lamb” (205).

39 The anonymous author of *The Satirists: A Satire* ([1739?]) suggests that abusive satire cannot do any good: “How base the Means! how impotent the End! / How vain th’ Attempt to hope a moral Use, / And gain one Proselyte, by gross abuse” (4). The poet’s own satire, however, is decidedly abusive, targeting authors not by full name, but by thinly disguised versions of them (e.g., “P--e” for Pope).
we think to convey any sober thoughts into them. They scorn to be formally advised or
taught; but they may perhaps be slily laughed and lured into a better mind. (51-52)

Like Blount (or, rather, Blount’s paraphrase of Rapin), Barrow disapproves of satire that is too direct—
but whereas Blount opposes brusque candor on principle, Barrow does so on the grounds of prudence.

Barrow is not alone in suggesting that, if rightly managed, tempered ridicule can “work.” Printed
with the 1717 Poems by the Earl of Roscomon [sic] is “An Essay on Poetry, By the Earl of Mulgrave,” in
which the poet holds forth on the satirist’s need for a soft touch. He acclaims the satirist’s ability “To
mend the Age, and mortifie Mankind,” and then insists that not all satire is equally laudable. The poet
advises those satirists who “think, if sharp enough, they cannot fail” to check their fury: “Rage you must
hide, and Prejudice lay down.” When he observes that, “SATYR well-writ has most successful prov’d,”
“well-writ” is clearly not an aesthetic but a temperamental judgment (306, 307). William Whitehead
offers much the same advice in his Essay on Ridicule (1743; 1s†), which concludes with a directive for
those who wish to jeer (or sneer) men out of their follies:

So let Goodnature [sic] o’er our Mirth preside,
Divert, not check; without impelling, guide.
   Allur’d by this, the gath’ring Frown unbends,
   The Laugh grows gen’ral, and ev’n Wits are Friends.
   Touch’d with this trickling Balm, fair Virtue wakes,
   And gen’rous Satire heals the Wound it makes. (19)

The author of A Treatise on Virtue and Happiness (2nd edn., 1736) recites the standard line—satire can
perhaps “put vice out of countenance”—but not without an important condition. “If it is rightly
managed,” the writer begins, then perhaps positive results might follow. Satirists should apply their
ridicule “with pleasantness and good humour, without any shew of hatred or ill will, and without any
sour aspects or magisterial airs, to create offence, and render it disgustful.” Like Barrow, this writer is
trying to think in terms of practical human psychology:

40 Steele issues similar counsel in The Spectator, No. 422 (4 July 1712): he counters “the false Notion some
People have of Raillery” (i.e., that it is mean-spirited), suggesting that the best writer of raillery practices the “Art of
keeping the Person he rallies in Countenance, by insinuating that he himself is guilty of the same Imperfection”
(3:582, 585).
good company and polite conversation, tend so much to refine mens manners, and to work off whatever is indecent and immoral. ... for there is nothing which men covet more than esteem, nor any thing they dread more than being despised, and exposed to scorn and derision. (180-81)  

Or, as Whitehead more succinctly concludes, “He feels the Lash, not listens to the Rein” (13). In his view, severity is not necessarily unethical or immoral but simply unproductive.

Some supporters of satire argue the opposite, insisting that to sweeten satire is to render it impotent. Effective correction requires a heavier hand. In “Upon Wit,” Blackmore affirms that real satire must be biting, because the “inveterate Diseases of the Mind are as hard to be remov’d as those of the Body; and therefore their Cures requires as sharp and painful Applications” (xvi). The poet who uses milder forms of comedy

must have a very sanguine Complexion, that can hope with such feeble and unequal Weapons, to triumph over Vice and Immorality. To endeavor to cure an Age over-spread with degenerate and licentious Manners by such ways, is to express great Ignorance of Human Nature, and the Power of Inordinate Appetites. One may as well charge a Gyant with a Bull-rush, or play upon a Conflagration with a Syringe, as attempt to make a wise and vertuous Nation with pleasant Humor and facetious Fancies. (xix)

In his Essay Towards Fixing the True Standards of Wit, Morris also encourages satirists to be rigorous in their attack. Raillery is gentle, but satire must be “severe,” as its intention is to expose serious vice; ruthlessness is not the province of raillery, “But Satire, the more deep and severe the Sting of it is, will be the more excellent.” In sharp contrast to those like Whitehead, Addison and Steele, Morris flatly rejects the notion that “Fear or Tenderness” has any place in satire (50). In the preface to his imitations of Juvenal (1763), Edward Burnaby Greene likewise doubts the potency of mere persiflage: “the attempt to laugh people out of their vices” is “not a little deficient to answer the end proposed.” Vice is a “violent disease,” Greene continues, and “requires a more violent remedy” than laughing reproof. Contemporary

41 See also Hibernicus’s Letters: or, a Philosophical Miscellany, 2 vols., 2nd edn. (1734), one of whose authors argues that laughter helps form the bonds of friendship, and that small vices can be “more effectually corrected by Ridicule, than by grave Admonition.” If ridicule is to work, the speaker must address the target with loving humanity (1:105).
42 Another example is The Satirist: A Poem (1771), whose author contends that only “Satire’s wrath” can “reclaim a harden’d race” (26).
43 Greene, The Satires of Juvenal Paraphrastically Imitated, And adapted to the Times (1763), v, vi.
antagonists to and enthusiasts for satire wrangle over issues of morality and respectability—but expositors on either side do not always speak in perfect harmony. Satire’s proponents prescribe markedly dissimilar methods for effective rebuke.

The point is simple. Writers who address issues of satiric technique have very different reasons for approving or disapproving the methods they discuss. Some have in mind basic human decency, some propriety and morality, and some sheer pragmatism. These distinctions are equally pertinent to debates about legitimate/illegitimate and reasonable/unreasonable subjects for satire. Technique and target are naturally very hard to separate. Most commentators acknowledge the fact that technique varies with, and to some extent depends upon, target: if human foibles should be met with a gentle laugh, then more contemptible iniquities deserve an iron fist. For my purposes, however—that is, in order to demonstrate the absence of any sort of consensus about satiric practice—we can make some crude and imperfect distinctions between method and target. I want now to survey attitudes toward the latter.

**Appropriate and inappropriate satiric targets**

The restriction of satire to follies (rather than vices) is something of a commonplace, and many writers of the long eighteenth century at least nominally espouse this position. Barrow claims in 1678 that the “proper objects of common mirth and sportfull divertisement are mean and petty matters” (63), and Blackmore issues a similar pronouncement in 1716, arguing that the “Object about which Wit is exercis’d, are the common and less important Actions of Life.” The law should deal with greater crimes, Blackmore explains, and

> Where then the Legislature ends, the Comick Genius begins, and presides over the low and ordinary Affairs and Manners of Life. It extends its Power and Jurisdiction over the wide Field of inferior Faults and ridiculous Follies, over the Districts of Indiscretion, Indecency, and Impertinence, and is Visitor of the Regions void of Discipline, Politeness, and Civility. . . . Hence Wit has no Place in History, Philology, Philosophy, or in the greater Lyrick or Epick Poems. (10)

In the same year, the author of *A Discourse on Ridicule* also maintains that “there are some Crimes, and Sins of Men, of that Enormity, and Size of Guilt, that they can never be mention’d by a good Christian
without Horror, and are therefore by no means proper Subjects of our Ridicule” (12). On the topic of illegitimate satiric concerns, this writer objects in particular to Lucian and especially his imitators, who are guilty of “mingling light Wit, and ludicrous Satyr with the Mention, and Description of Hell, and Judgment, which a good Christian cannot think of without Awe upon his Soul” (19). In the preface to *Joseph Andrews* (1742), Fielding cheerfully explains that the “Ridiculous only . . . falls within [his] Province” and maintains the “Absurdity of an Author, who should write the *Comedy of Nero*, with the merry Incident of ripping up his Mother’s Belly.” Life’s “blackest Villanies” and most “dreadful Calamities” cannot really be ridiculed. Although he has “introduced Vices, and of a very black kind” into his writing, he says, those vices “are never set forth as Objects of Ridicule of Detestation.” According to these writers, the satirist should apply his talents only to the trivial—or should at least eschew res severa, those exceptionally grave subjects that are not to be treated with laughter.45

A directly antithetical position is asserted by other authors, who contend that the satirist should confront not petty failings and errors but rather the most consequential offenses. Satire should be “always concerned with *Vices of Persons*,” Morris asserts, rather than with their foibles (52). More broadly, whereas Blackmore confines the satirist to those subjects “beneath” the legislature, others regard satire as a regulatory force comparable to the arm of law. The satirist “of true genius,” suggests one commentator, “may be considered as a sort of supplement to the legislative authority of his country.”46 Another writer puts the satirist in charge of punishing those transgressions and villainies that, because not technically criminal, are outside the bench’s jurisdiction.

There are Crimes of a very high Nature, which are not cognisable in the ordinary Courts of Justice, such as Ingratitude, the denying a Deposit, the betraying of a Friend’s Secrets; and among these I may reckon such Frauds, as for want of legal Evidence escape with Impunity. These and all other Evils, which are not punishable by the Civil Magistrate, are

45 Or, in Aaron Hill’s pithy decree, “WHEN FOLLIES ARE BECOME TOO GREAT FOR LAUGHTER, THEY ARE NO LONGER TO BE LAUGH’D AT.” See *The Prompter*, No. 127 (27 January 1736).
46 *English Originals in Prose and Verse Collected by I. L. Schulze, A. M.*, 2nd edn. (Hall: 1766), 159. The quotation comes from “Letter to Euphronius,” attributed by the compiler to Thomas Fitzosborne, and is part of a section headed, “The publick advantage of well directed Satyr. The moral qualifications requisite to a Satyrist.”
surely the proper Objects of Satire; nor is the Satirist obliged to stop short, because the Criminal may happen to die, while he is telling his Story.47

The satirist, according to these accounts, has the right and even the responsibility to use his weapons to combat the weightiest infractions and failings.

Eighteenth-century writers disagree about the scale on which satire can operate, and also about what particular types of targets should be exposed. What is beyond the purview of the satirist, and what is fair game? Commentators routinely condemn satire directed at irremediable defects. The author of Some Critical and Politick Remarks On . . . Faction Display’d claims, for example, that “we never see any body exposed in true Satyr, but for something that is their fault, and in their power to mend” (7). This assertion is manifestly false, of course, but then factuality is hardly the point of most satire theory. The objection to mocking unavoidable misfortunes is voiced repeatedly and angrily in the wake of the 1728 Dunciad. Ward’s response to that poem is a marvelously nasty piece of vituperation on “the pigmy Bard,” whose poem teaches readers “How to despise true Merit when it’s poor” (4, 39). Another of Pope’s aggrieved respondents bemoans more broadly the failure of modern satirists to follow their classical models:

SATIRE was certainly of admirable Use among the Antients, and is of no less among the Moderns; but then they always chose for their Theme some reigning Vice, or growing Folly: But where can you find a Persius, a Juvenal, or Horace, lashing of Personal Defect, or Turns of Providence? These Pious Heathens well knew that Calamities were not Crimes; and always exempted such from being the Subject of Satire. They knew it was not in the Power of a Man to make his own Fortune, any more than he could make his own Person.48

But the victims of The Dunciad are not the only writers who took exception to sporting with or sneering at unalterable deficiencies. In 1711, Addison announces decisively that, “A Satyr should expose nothing but what is corrigeable.”49

48 Codrus: or, the Dunciad Dissected (1728), 7-8.
49 The Spectator, 2:321 (No. 209, 30 October 1711).
Many such irreparable problems—theoretically exempt from ridicule—are “natural” imperfections. Blackmore specifies that

WIT is likewise misapply’d, when exercis’d to ridicule any unavoidable Defects and Deformities of Body or Mind; for since nothing is a moral Blemish, but as it is the Effect of our own Choice, nothing can be disgraceful but what is voluntary, and brought freely upon our selves; and since nothing is the proper Object of Raillery and Ridicule, but what is shameful, it must be a Violence to Reason and Humanity, to reproach and expose for any Thing that was not in his Power to escape. (18)

At least in principle, Blackmore proscribes satiric attacks on either mental or physical imperfections. The author of Some Critical and Politick Remarks On . . . Faction Display’d had taken a slightly different view: real satire does not strike at unfixable deficiencies, and the only such defects are physical.

The civillest thing I can say of [a passage in Faction Display’d] is, that it puts me in mind of Dryden’s broad way of abusing Shadwell in his Mock Fleckno. The Malice is too apparent, and the Epithets layed on too thick. Besides, prov’d want of Sense, is Nonsense, for a Negative cannot be proved. Stammering and Fetter’d Tongue point at natural Infirmities, which the Criticks will not allow to be Objects of Satyr. (7)

Both Faction Display’d and Mac Flecknoe exhibit “virulent-ill nature,” he complains; the “business” of the real satirist, he says, “is with the maladies of the Mind,” not of the body (7, 9). In other words, whereas Blackmore refuses to condone attacks on either body or mind, this writer excludes only the former.

The author of A Discourse on Ridicule (1716) likewise insists that irremediable woes are illegitimate objects of satire, but that is not his only criterion. His anxiety about illegitimate targets is neither that of Ward nor of Blackmore.

We must exercise our Faculty of Laughter, and Talent of Ridicule upon due Objects; that is to say, upon proper Persons, and proper Things. Upon proper Persons: For there are some Persons, whom either their Dignity, or Authority, exempt from our Ridicule. Again; There are some Persons of that Genius and Temper, that they are offended and exasperated by the most innocent Raillery. We should then out of christian Charity avoid as much as possible giving such Offence. And as our Ridicule must be directed to proper Persons, so likewise to proper Things. We must not deride the Poverty and Calamity of our Neighbors. . . . Nor may we deride our own Misery: For this is to make a very irreligious Use of Afflictions. . . . Nor may we ridicule the Sins and Vices either of our Neighbour, or ourselves. (10)

An unspecified class of people is “above” mockery; anyone sensitive to ridicule should out of decency be spared; and several specified misfortunes cannot be rightly targeted. This directive wants particulars, but
clearly the author is not merely supplying a standard catalogue of impermissible satiric butts. Nothing of the sort exists to be invoked or recited.

A small number of authors protest that satirists—too often only ill-natured wits—abuse exactly that which should be applauded. In a 1718 sermon, Jasper How opines that

the brightest Virtue is liable to Censure, and cannot always escape the Slander of malicious Tongues. There are some who take delight in Satire, and are never employ’d more to their Satisfaction, than when reproaching and defaming the Innocent; such will make Virtue and Piety itself the Subject of their wicked Drollery.\(^{50}\)

How inveighs against the perversity inherent in condemning righteousness. His objection resembles Addison’s complaint of the following year: the satire of a clever but petulant man will “chiefly fall upon those who ought to be the most exempt from it. Virtue, Merit, and every Thing that is Praise-worthy, will be made the Subject of Ridicule.”\(^{51}\) Addison repeatedly distinguishes between appropriate and inappropriate types of wit. In *The Spectator*, No. 23, he explains that, “Lampoons and Satyrs, that are written with Wit and Spirit, are like poison’d Darts, which not only inflict a Wound, but make it incurable. For this Reason I am very much troubled when I see the Talents of Humour and Ridicule in the Possession of an ill-natured Man” (1:97; 27 March 1711). In *The Tatler* No. 242, Steele had likewise emphasized the importance of benevolence to proper satire: good nature is “an essential Quality in a Satyrist,” for

Good-Nature produces a Disdain of all Baseness, Vice, and Folly, which prompts them to express themselves with Smartness against the Errors of Men, without Bitterness towards their Persons. This Quality keeps the Mind in Equanimity, and never lets an Offence unseasonably throw a Man out of his Character. (3:241; 26 October 1710)

Like Addison and Steele, How is troubled by satire’s tendency to attack the innocent—but the correlation ends there. How’s consternation resembles their controlled proprieties much less than it recalls Glanvill’s fulmination against excessive mirth. Like Glanvill, if less fervently, How damningly associates drollery not with bad manners but with impiety.

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\(^{50}\) How, *A Sermon Preach’d at Exon, May 7, 1718* (Exon: 1718), 29.

Should satire be general or particular? A frequently and vehemently asserted imperative is that the satirist not specify individual targets: “real Names,” says Ward, “turn Satyr to abuse.” At least in theory, many writers require that the satirical account be non-specific—but not always because personal satire is unfair or indecent. A number of commentators appear just as concerned about efficacy as about moral or ethical appropriateness. In 1711 Dennis maintains, for example, that

general Satire is preferable to what is particular, not only because the Design is more generous, of obliging all, and offending none, but because there is a greater probability of its attaining the End to which it directs its Aim, which is the Reformation of the Reader. For the Pleasure which we find that the Generality of Mankind takes in particular Satire, is a certain Sign that the Publick reaps little Benefit from it; for few are willing to apply those Faults to themselves.

Attacks on individuals will not achieve the desired result (reform of audience, not target) because readers not specifically indicated will not admit the criticism’s relevance to them. Swift’s remark is only the most famous: “SATYR is a sort of Glass, wherein Beholders do generally discover every body’s Face but their Own.”

A 1717 writer likewise laments that the reformation through ridicule “must necessarily be made from general Characters,” because “where a particular Man is sneer’d at, every one is for throwing the Ridicule off from himself, and can find nothing in his own Conduct to correct from the Lesson.”

Personal satire has plenty of enemies, but it is criticized for being inadequate as much as for being malicious.

Not everyone agrees that general satire is unable to get through to individual readers. Sir John Fielding argues that only in non-particularized satire will a reader see his or her own faults described: “A general representation of an action, either ridiculous or enormous, may make those wince, who find too

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52 Ward, Durgen, 9. A number of commentators (especially in the mid-eighteenth century) insist that satire “be pointed at the Vice more than at the Man”—so says William Webster in Tracts Consisting of Sermons, Discourses, and Letters (1745), 299. See also The Parrot. With a Compendium of the Times, No. 8 (1746): “A Satirist, whose Aim is to reform, will paint the Offence in its strongest Colours, but draw, as much as possible, a Veil over the Face of the Offender.”


55 The Censor, 3 vols., 2nd edn. (1717). 2:58-59. See also “Satire,” in Moral and Critical Reflections on Several Subjects: “The World is seldom benefited by general Satire, because few People will put the Cap upon their own Heads, while they please themselves with thinking that it will fit other Heads as well” (205).
much similitude in the character with themselves.”  

Fielding is writing half a century after Dennis, of course, and his reversal of his predecessor’s conclusion bespeaks a much more generous view of human nature. But back in 1677 Sir Carr Scroope had made a similar case, suggesting that satirical “wit, / Frightens a million where a few you hit.”  

Scroope is defending satire, and so may simply be exaggerating claims about its potency—though he is underscoring its power to terrorize rather than to reform. In any case, we can find in the period directly antonymous opinions about the scale on which satire is likeliest to reach (i.e., reform) its intended audience.

Other commentators more solemnly denounce general satire. The author of the 1716 Discourse on Ridicule insinuates that too-general satire is not futile but blasphemous: to poke fun at common failings is to scorn human nature, and thus to deride the Creator who made us and our neighbors. The proper targets of satire, he enjoins, are “acquired Follies, and Affectations.” Because only those people “whom not GOD, but themselves have made Objects of Ridicule,” the satirist is duty-bound, to some extent at least, to particularize his attack (12). A late eighteenth-century critic of Gulliver’s Travels indicts Swift’s satire on the same grounds. James Beattie’s 1783 judgment of Book IV of the Travels is filled with righteous indignation:

this tale represents human nature itself as the object of contempt and abhorrence. Let the ridicule of wit be pointed at the follies, and let the scourge of satire be brandished at the crimes of mankind: all this is both pardonable, and praise-worthy; because it may be done with a good intention, and produce good effects. But when a writer endeavours to make us dislike and despise, every one his neighbour, and be dissatisfied with that Providence, who has made us what we are, and whose dispensations towards the human race are so peculiarly, and so divinely beneficent; such a writer, in so doing, proves himself the enemy, not of man only, but of goodness itself; and his work can never be allowed to be innocent, till impiety, malevolence, and misery, cease to be evils.  

56 Sir John Fielding, The Universal Mentor; containing, Essays on the Most important Subjects in Life (1763), 234.  
57 Scroope, In defence of Satire, ll. 80-81.  
58 Beattie, Dissertations Moral and Critical (1783), 515-16. In her Verses Address’d to the Imitator of the First Satire of the Second Book of Horace (1733), Lady Mary Wortley Montagu also opposes general satire, though for much different reasons:  

Satire shou’d, like a polish’d Razor keen,  
Wound with a Touch, that’s scarcely felt or seen.  
Thine is an Oyster-Knife, that hacks and hews;
Satire that tends toward the general rather than the particular, in this account, is misanthropic and thus sacrilegious. Not all principled opposition to generalized satire is so stern. Henry Fielding’s concept of satire (discussed in chapter 6) is notoriously amiable, and he frequently schools his readers in the wisdom of taking care not to pass judgment too soon or based on too little information. In *Tom Jones* (1749), he warns against passing “a severe Sentence upon the whole, merely on account of some vicious Part.” Blifil is a villain and his villainy is exposed—but Fielding basically believes in the goodness of human nature. His disapproval of generalized satire is a long way from Beattie’s solemn denunciation. A realist with much sympathy and a rich sense of humor, he is worried not about irreligion but about impractical attitudes toward human behavior.

I will state the obvious: eighteenth-century writers did not agree about what was permissible (or not) and valuable (or not) in the realm of satiric practice. Writers worry about very different issues in radically disparate ways and for a wide range of reasons. Some commentators assert that satire must be true or else it is merely slander, but veracity is not universally regarded as requisite. Several people assert enthusiastically that satire should be “sweeten’d,” but others contend just as emphatically that the best satire is that which uncompromisingly scorches its target. Even writers who advocate the same “type” of satire—e.g., razor-sharp ridicule or sugar-coated sallies—have drastically dissimilar reasons for doing so. Participants in these discussions adopt fundamentally incompatible positions (e.g., the proper province of satire is the trivial or is everything but the trivial). The temptation is great to regard these disagreements as tidy binaries—Horatian amiability versus Juvenalian wrath, follies versus crimes, general versus particular satire, and so on. But to treat them as such is to smudge distinctions that we very much need.

The Rage, but not the Talent of Abuse;
And is in Hate, what Love is in the Stews.
’Tis the gross Lust of Hate, that still annoys,
Without distinction, as gross Love enjoys:
Neither to Folly, nor to Vice confin’d;
The Object of thy Spleen is Human Kind:
It preys on all, who yield, or who resist;
To Thee ‘tis Provocation to exist. (4-5)

Even where we find at least apparent correspondences, we also find significant incongruity that cannot be ignored. Henry Fielding and Beattie both disapprove of general satire, but calling satires on man unrealistic and calling them irreverent are vastly dissimilar judgments. As one eighteenth-century commentator astutely points out, “NEITHER is the Taste of Mankind less capricious with regard to the Methods of Ridicule, than the Objects of it.” As many other contemporaries no doubt understood, in the realm of satirical target and technique, observers then or now would be hard-pressed to find any uncontested or uniform position.

IV. Characterizing the satirist

How did satirists present themselves, and how was “The Satirist” viewed by contemporaries? Elkin emphasizes a fairly straightforward phenomenon: a number of contemporaries vilified satirists as inhumane, and in response many satirists duly struck the moral pose, offering grandiloquent defenses of their work. The charges of malevolence and the counter-cries of moral and social utility have been much alluded to by modern scholars—but does that conflict fairly represent contemporary attitudes, pro or con, towards satirists?

Most positive representations of the satirist are actually affirmations of the value of satire. As I have already enumerated the various conceptions of satire’s function, I will not rehearse them again here. I will only say that most positive characterizations of the satirist tend to be unremarkable. Not uncommon is the claim that the satirist is compelled by “generous Indignation”—by a resistance to wrongdoing that every good man should feel “when he reflects on the Insolence of Exalted Vice, which has a pernicious Effect on the Community.” The author of The Repository, or General Review (1756) offers a lackluster (if unusual) defense of the satirist, questioning those who “imagine that a satirist must be made up of

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60 Brown, “Essay on Ridicule,” 53. Brown’s amplification is worth attention: “What is high Humour at Wapping, is rejected as nauseous in the City: What is delicate Raillery in the City, grows coarse and intolerable as you approach St. James’s: And as many a well meant Joke, that passes unheeded in all these various Districts, would set an innocent Country Village in an Uproar of Laughter. This Subject might be much enlarged on: For the Modes and Objects of Ridicule are as indefinite as the imagined Combinations of Things” (54).

61 Thomas Gilbert, A Satire on All Parties: A Poem (1749), iv.
spleen, envy, and ill-nature.” That assumption, the writer dispassionately maintains, “is by no means certain and determinate: I know an author of a tragedy, who is the merriest man living; and one who has wrote a very witty comedy, though he will sit an hour in company without speaking a word.”\(^{62}\) Other supporters of the satirist operate on the principle that the best defense is a good offense: they accuse those who attack the satirist of having something to hide. A 1721 commentator alleges that, “Whoever fears Ridicule, deserves Ridicule. He is conscious of a weak Side, and knows he cannot stand a Laugh.”\(^{63}\)

Favorable attitudes toward the satirist are not as multifarious as the opinions about satiric practice surveyed above, but neither are they uniform: the satirist is alternately glorified (often in patently self-promoting ways), praised, and accepted by some writers, while others simply withhold judgment, refusing to malign his or her character on the basis of the work alone.

Negative representations of the satirist are wider-ranging and usually more interesting. The accusation of meanness is as hackneyed as the moral defense, of course, though the degree of animosity varies. Giles Jacob maintains that the “chief Design” of satire is “to find fault,” and that “A little Wit, and a great deal of Ill-Nature, will qualify a Man for a Satirist.”\(^{64}\) Half a century earlier, Walter Charleton had described the “malignant” satirical wits not just as excessively critical but as sub-human: they are “the ill-natured Disciples of \textit{Momus, Derisores, Scoffers}, such who, like Beetles, seem hatch’d in dung, or Vermine bred out of Ulcers; perpetually feeding upon the frailties and imperfections of Human nature.”\(^{65}\) Ward’s venomous castigation of Pope is just as vividly judgmental: the derisory brute “squirts down frothy Satyrs with contempt” (17). What is worse, for some critics, is that these writers seem to revel in contumelies. Describing the “satyrists,” Blount maintains that “\textit{Pleasure} [is] their Principle, and Interest

\(^{62}\) The Repository, or General Review: consisting chiefly of a Select Collection of Literary Compositions . . . with Occasional Remarks (1756), 128.

\(^{63}\) The Independent Whig (1721), 304. See also The Satirist: In Imitation of the Fourth Satire of the First Book of Horace (1733): “Satire, to these, is monstrously ill-bred, / They wisely damn the Poet that they dread” (9).

\(^{64}\) Jacob, The Poetical Register: or, the Lives and Characters of the English Dramatick Poets. With an Account of their Writings, 2 vols. (1719-20; 6s†), 2:xxiii. Although Addison and Steele both denounce ill-natured satire, both obviously believe in the possibility for good-natured satire (see The Tatler, No. 242, in which Steele praises the ability to laugh “with a Delicacy of Scorn, without any Mixture of Anger,” 3:241).

\(^{65}\) Charleton, A Brief Discourse Concerning the Different Wits of Men: Written . . . In the Year 1664 (1669), 119.
their God," and a later commentator complains that modern poets have “deboched” satire, reprehensibly delighting in the expression of malice and in “the Joy of Spight.”

The satirist is not only accused of meanness, but also assumed to suffer a variety of psychological problems. Jasper How suggests that those satirists who abuse the innocent are not merely cranky but are also subconsciously aware of their own depravity. These writers have “secret Reasons” for their cruelty, “and more than every Man knows of, a conscious Sense of Guilt, which puts them upon this vile and abusive Practice, in hopes of composing their own rankled Spirits” (29). If not remorse, then other forms of self-contempt compel satirists to apply the lash. In Dennis’s Remarks on Mr. Pope’s Rape of the Lock (1728), he explains Pope’s nastiness as an unfortunate byproduct of his racking sense of inadequacy: “It was for no other Reason that he has libell’d Mr. Theobald, Mr. Phillips, and several others, than that they have surpass’d him.” Feeling like less of a poet—so argues Dennis—this “little envious Creature” directed his spiteful insults at those he perceived as his superiors. Charleton had put the point more broadly in 1669: “the more imperfect men are in themselves, the more prone they are to defame and scoff at others” (131). Charleton refers to the satirist as a scoffer, and his usage of that term, like Glanvill’s, has momentous connotations.

If the satirist is a “scoffer,” then we are again in the realm not of incivility and rudeness, but of blasphemy. Detraction in the form of scurrility and mockery is inextricably linked, for those like Glanvill and Charleton, to the most heinous forms of disbelief. The author of Raillerie a la mode Consider’d provides perhaps the most eloquent of the objections to vicious wit. Before describing the detractor, he explains the difficulties of rendering such an execrable fiend:

66 Blount, De Re Poetica, 45; Miscellanies in Prose & Verse, By the most honorable Marquis of Normanby . . . To which is added, Precepts, Maxims, and Reflections, Extracted from the most Celebrated Greek and Latin Poets (1702), 32.
67 In Tears of the Muses; in a Conference between Prince Germanicus, and a Male-content Party (1737), Aaron Hill implies that the satirist—because human—is guilty of the faults he censures: “Who is there, to say Truth, so unguilty of the Follies of Life, that he dares, in his own proper Person, stand out and justify the Right he assumes, of reproaching the Conduct of Others?” (viii).
I should find my Ink not Black enough to Paint so Foul a Monster; nor could a Man have Courage enough to Draw the Devil, without the Security of some Good Guardian by his side. But I'll venture on Him; for, as they say, if we can but draw the Bloud of Witches, their Envious Intents cease. (49)

The detractor, he says,

is a kind of Camelion, that lives upon the worst sort of Air; at first bred up and suckled with sour Sustenance from the lank and flaggy Dugs of his lean and meager Mother Envy, he afterwards feeds on Fame; his words are worse than Poyson of Asps, and are a kind of Witchcraft, so that the Sufferer may justly be said to be under an Evil Tongue. Like one of the wayward Sisters, he siphithly picks the foul and poysous Weeds out of the fairest Gardens of Mens fruitful Labors, wherewith to work his wicked Sorceries; with venomous Breath endeavoring to blast the best and fragrant Flowers of Mens Writings, that they may wither in the minds and memories of the World. (51-52)

The detractor—the defamer, the malevolent wit—is not only ill-mannered and impious, but is actually demented; his language is “a kind of Witchcraft.” Elkin quotes this passage at length (misdating the piece “1763” for 1673), but he labels the writer’s description of the satirist simply “unflattering” (53). To categorize this author’s account with Addison’s (p. 55 in Elkin)—to combine them under the heading “unflattering”—is to misapprehend both. No mere bad-tempered bully or abuser of the innocent, the satirist this writer describes is dealing in diabolism.

Eighteenth-century commentary on “the satirist” is both mixed and surprisingly scant. A number of writers clearly have notions about the satirist, but most are voiced only indirectly, through statements about satire and its utility or harmfulness. Defenses of the satirist are usually defenses of satire, and those, as I have already suggested, take numerous forms. Attacks on the satirist are more often attacks on satire than systematic indictments of satirical motives. Observations explicitly concerned with the author of satire are rare and mostly non-congruent. Gilbert Highet has pointed to “two different types of satirist,” distinct in every way:

One likes most people, but thinks they are rather blind and foolish. He tells the truth with a smile, so that he will not repel them but cure them of that ignorance which is their worst fault. Such is Horace. The other type hates most people, or despises them. . . . His aim therefore is not to cure, but to wound, to punish, to destroy. Such is Juvenal. 69

Highte rightly distinguishes between different notions of satire, but we cannot presume that eighteenth-century respondents would have shared our taxonomical schemes or recognized categories we now believe in. They do not appear to have in mind Leonard Feinberg’s definitive notion of “the satirist”—a writer who “functions as an artist, not as a moralist,” who “is never satisfied with an objective report,” and who is motivated by the desire to earn “recognition and approbation.” Like Feinberg, Charles A. Knight tries to encapsulate and particularize “the satiric frame of mind.” For Knight, the satirist is “a skeptical and bemused observer,” but also “a trickster, an agent as well as an observer, proclaiming truths disguised as lies and directing the action to bring about the ends he has proclaimed.” To which satirist are Feinberg and Knight referring? Pope may be seeking “recognition and approbation,” but the scores of anonymous satirists can hardly be thought to have been so motivated. Nor can either Defoe or Swift, two radically different satirists, be justly explained as a “skeptical and bemused observer.” Modern depictions of “the satirist” are badly out of sync with the actualities of eighteenth-century satire—and they do not reflect eighteenth-century notions, insofar as they exist, of “the satirist.”

V. Perceptions of eighteenth-century satire then and now

Did eighteenth-century commentators believe that they were living in the great and glorious Age of Satire? The answer is definitely No. Satire was a contentious subject for many writers. Its opponents were clearly upset about it, but they were also aware that it constituted a significant enough problem that they needed to respond. Even those who basically approved of satire did not necessarily commend the works venerated by modern scholars (e.g., Dryden’s *Mac Flecknoe*). Satire produced anxiety, not only because of its moral and social consequences but because of the sheer uncertainties of the form. What did it mean? How could it be used? What needed to be disqualified? What should the models be? Who wrote it, why, and for whom? No consensus existed in the realms of definition, concept, terminology,

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objective, method, target, or attitude toward the satirist. Contemporary commentary is profuse but scrappy and sketchy, and attitudes toward satire are decidedly mixed. Modern scholars who have long thought of the years from the Restoration to the death of Pope as the “Augustan” period have also hailed it as the heyday of English satire—but however spectacular some of the works themselves, nothing suggests that contemporaries recognized satire as the crowning achievement of their age.

How did eighteenth-century writers view satire? Their commentary reflects an unsettled, variegated, incoherent, and fundamentally dynamic state of affairs. The relevant primary material is unwieldy, a great number of often very patchy and imprecise bits. It comprises well-worn clichés, partisan swipes, blatant self-promotion, innumerable explications and expostulations, allusions en passant, and analyses interminable. The resultant conglomeration abounds with incompatible credos and amorphous concepts of satire. Writers quarrel with each other on a number of issues—see the debate about ridicule incited by Shaftesbury—but many appear thoroughly indifferent to matters that others regard as vitally important, such as etymology. What the mass of contemporary commentary reflects is not a clear-cut dispute between advocates of satire and their adversaries, but a mélange of values, interests, concerns, and convictions.

Elkin was the first scholar to try to describe theories of satire in this period at all systematically, and his study has been almost universally deferred to as the authoritative account of the subject. What is the nature of his description? Although he wisely warns against expecting “this formidable volume of critical writing to yield a ‘theory’ of satire,” he also tries to illustrate what he calls “the orthodox viewpoint of the Augustan critics” (2, 71). His thesis, broadly, is that the “Augustans” said one thing and did another. Eighteenth-century defenders of satire trumpet its reformative powers, but the loudly asserted moral justification contrasts sharply with the predominantly abusive realities of satiric practice. For Elkin, the “Augustans” divided themselves neatly into two camps: those “for” satire and those “against.” The battle lines are clearly drawn and ubiquitously articulated, suggests Elkin, who finds the combatants on either side part of a coherent and recognizable faction. The exception is Swift, whom he presents as the lone nonconformist in the realm of satire theory: the Dean delighted in satire’s
vindictiveness, and so “was the only satirist of the age to look on his vocation with . . . honest
discernment.” The rest of “his fellow satirists,” Elkin continues, “preferred to present themselves to the
public as practical reformers” (88). He may just be overstating his case, but the declaration of
homogeneity—with a single glitch in the form of Jonathan Swift—just does not square with the evidence.

Elkin read widely in a massive body of material—and he found the clear-cut categories that he
evidently set out to find. He assumes the importance of a Drydenian/Popean position (defense of satire on
high moral grounds) and of an Addisonian position (opposition to satire’s meanness), and organizes the
bulk of material accordingly. The sorting of contemporary commentary into two clearly-defined
pigeonholes requires some questionable generalization. Elkin suggests, for example, that “Contemporary
satire, in the opinion of . . . Addison, Blackmore, Collier, Dennis, Shaftesbury, Steele, Whitehead,
Wolseley, and countless others throughout the Augustan period, needed to be purged of malice and
pettiness” (63). These writers no doubt agreed that satire could be malicious and petty. To lump them
together, however, is to enforce synchronicity on commentators who at best only occasionally reach
roughly similar conclusions, but who more often make different sorts of arguments with varying levels of
intensity.

Whence Elkin’s apparent predisposition to find congruity and unity—to unearth an
“orthodoxy”—in eighteenth-century attitudes toward satire? He wrote his account in the immediate
aftermath of mid-century publications by major satire scholars such as Ian Jack, Alvin B. Kernan,
Maynard Mack, and Ronald Paulson. These critics, as Griffin has rightly observed, “had enough
confidence and comprehensive vision to make large claims about satire as a genre.” Whatever its
limitations, Elkin’s study was timely. It provided the counterpart to—and even the theoretical
justification for—their arguments about eighteenth-century satire. Modern scholars from the mid-
twentieth century on have tended to think of satire as essentially pessimistic and ineffectual. As a result,
they have also assumed (as Elkin does) that attitudes toward satire reflect its predominantly malicious

nature. More specifically, they have made blanket assumptions about the nature of (1) the opposition to and (2) the defense of satire.

Both the “pro” and “con” positions have been badly oversimplified. (1) Satire’s adversaries unvaryingly charged it with meanness and pointlessness. Is this true? Satirists are often accused of depravity, but I have tried to demonstrate the substantial variations, in type and degree, of such charges. And for at least some of satire’s detractors, its ineffectiveness would have only been a relief: a good many were intensely alarmed by its potential to do real harm, either to an individual target or to society more broadly. (2) Satire’s supporters were defensive and apologetic in their efforts to prove its moral utility, or so some modern critics assume, and in claiming its reformative powers were either innocent or hypocritical. Griffin is puzzled and unsettled by the fact that

the moral defense of satire is presented in such crude terms, as if the satirist were offering elementary lessons in distinguishing good from evil, combating vice and regulating passion, to an audience of moral infants. Theorists devoted some attention to the way in which satire allegedly corrected its readers, but most were (by our lights, anyway) naïve and optimistic about satire’s power to “banish Vice and Folly.” (26)

The dismissal of contemporary considerations about the “way” in which satire works is too hasty. In fact, modern enthusiasm for drastic and bombastic defenses of satire (e.g., Pope’s “O sacred Weapon!”) has confused the issue. Critics are keen to see Dryden and Pope—loud proponents of high-minded satire but often practitioners of more sordid lampoonery—as representative of the “Augustan Defense” described by Elkin. But a remarkable number of satire’s proponents actually eschewed generalized declarations of its utility and instead asked fairly seriously just how it might work: this type of target will work, that sort of technique will not reach this kind of audience, and so on. Yet others appear to have been largely uninterested in the “moral function,” and instead unapologetically embraced the power and the glory of vituperation.

The division into “for” and “against” creates a false impression. Eighteenth-century attitudes toward satire do not reduce to a pro-satire school and an anti-satire school, each of which has its primary spokesmen (Dryden/Pope or Addison/Blackmore, respectively) and a legion of disciples of the same persuasion. Those who defend satire do not tend to quote Dryden; those who worry about satire’s malice
generally do not refer to Addison; and those who revel in satire’s meanness do not cite Swift. We imagine the existence of single standard-bearers for these positions—just as we assume that these attitudes were the only possibilities and were understood by contemporaries as such—but that is not the reality. What Elkin and others regard as central to the theory of satire was not very often cited, was not obviously familiar to contemporaries, and did not unite groups of commentators into “schools” of thought. Dryden and Pope are central to modern concepts of eighteenth-century satire theory, but few respondents evoked those writers to clarify their own positions. No single debate dominated, and no real consensus existed in the long eighteenth century on any issue related to the practice of satire.

Chronological survey of the material does not reveal any sort of tidy evolution. No categorical shift occurred over time from one definition of or attitude toward satire to another. This is not to say that 1760 is more or less the same world as 1660, but what separates them is not a traceable developmental pattern. One can document changes over time. The intensity with which mid- to late-seventeenth-century writers inveigh against wit-as-blasphecy is never matched later in the period. In the late seventeenth century, writers discuss “mirth” rather than “ridicule”; the latter becomes a noticeably more current term with Shaftesbury c. 1708. That shift is a feature of, among other things, the general transformation in attitudes toward laughter: as Stuart M. Tave demonstrated in *The Amiable Humorist* (1960), the meaning of laughter changes noticeably over the long eighteenth century, becoming less disparaging and more sympathetic. A number of mid-seventeenth-century writers applaud laughter as an essential part of human society, and commentators a century later unashamedly endorse the castigatory powers of ridicule—but the shift in focus away from “mirth” and toward “ridicule” is one indication of a major climatic change. “Mirth” is a non-particularized type of humor; “ridicule” is ridicule *of*: writers worry less about “laughter” and more about “laughter *at,*” about the (proper, legitimate, and fair) treatment of the victim/target.

Attitudes toward satire shift markedly over the course of the long eighteenth century. Harsh satire falls increasingly out of favor, “hard” comedy gives way to “soft,” and instead of unsparing judgment writers are more inclined to sympathetic nudging. To the nature of this change I will return in
chapter 7, but practice does shift—and so, to some extent, do responses to satire. No doubt for every trend there are exceptions and counterexamples: the debates about ridicule make manifest the existence of fundamental variations in opinion found among contemporaneous writers. The striking tonal change is a fact, but at no point in this period does an orthodox position exist, and neither can we find a tidy dichotomy of the sort promulgated by Elkin.

Eighteenth-century pronouncements on satire cannot legitimately be represented as a predominant mode practiced by “them.” Most scholars have not wanted to deal with this evidence at all, and much of the modern sense of eighteenth-century satire theory derives from a woefully small and unrepresentative sampling of favorite authors. Satire critics routinely feature Dryden’s Discourse as both helpfully explanatory of satire in this period and as monumentally influential; they treat Pope’s self-promotion as objective discourse, a reliable index to what authors believed satire ought to do; they cite Addison and Steele as tempering influences on contemporaries’ concept of satire; they sometimes give a passing glance to Shaftesbury. Scholars after Elkin have understandably not felt compelled to read beyond Dryden, Pope, Addison, and Steele—in part because they have not been inclined to distrust Elkin’s survey, which includes not only the big names but also many of obscure texts and unknown writers. He read widely, but he appears to have done so with his conclusions already determined. The results suggest that he began not by asking, “What sort of taxonomy makes sense, and how can these works best be discussed?” but “In which of my prefabricated categories do these fit?” My own survey is neither perfect nor complete, and other critics could organize the material very differently, but a reasonably objective examination should reveal the heterogeneity of the culture of eighteenth-century satire.

At this point the exasperated reader may legitimately ask a couple of questions. Why such disagreement about satire among eighteenth-century writers? And what can we usefully conclude from the differences of opinion? My answer is short, and if not sweet, at least clear. Classical, Continental, and Renaissance predecessors in the practice of satire notwithstanding, “satire” was nothing like a settled form as of the later seventeenth century. “Satire” had both supporters and opponents, but as the supporters have no consistent notion of what the form is supposed to do, the debate of necessity started
out unfocused and remained that way. What we have to conclude from this, I believe, is that any attempt
to formulate an ex-post-facto “Augustan” theory of satire (or whatever other term we choose) is of
necessity doomed to failure. There is no underlying clarity and coherence of concept to be found in the
writings of English critics of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and none emerges as we
proceed past 1750. To acknowledge the full range of eighteenth-century satiric theory, in other words, is
to anticipate and to accept the radical diversity in eighteenth-century satiric practice.
Chapter 3

Satire in the Carolean Period

The survey of practice that constitutes the remainder of this book spans the period circa 1650 to circa 1770, with no pretense of special significance or precision as to either date. The opening chapter deals centrally with satiric practice in the reign of Charles II (1660-1685), though it also gives some attention to the kinds of satire found in the decade preceding the Restoration. The year 1660 does not represent a magical beginning, and neither does anything come to a tidy end in 1770. I adopt that date because it gets us a generation beyond the heyday of Pope and Swift and well into new writers and modes.

To make sense of what we find in the time of Charles II, we need to start with two very basic questions. Why did Carolean satirists write satire, and what is the nature of the works they produced? Scholars have tended either to characterize late seventeenth-century satire in terms of post-1700 developments (as “pre-Augustan”) or to formulate a “Restoration mode” of satire based on a small number of verse exemplars. Critics invariably discuss *Mac Flecknoe* and *Absalom and Achitophel* and a few poems by Rochester; they sometimes include Marvell’s “Painter” poems and Oldham’s *Satyrs upon the Jesuits*; they routinely mention but rarely discuss Butler’s *Hudibras*.

Two recent studies of satire in this period have sought, from different perspectives, to correct a methodological flaw in the way this material has been treated. Harold Love’s *English Clandestine Satire 1660-1702* (2004) and Robert D. Hume’s “‘Satire’ in the Reign of Charles II” (2005) are tremendously useful accounts whose authors refuse to privilege the major writers and acknowledge the messy realities

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1 As Rose A. Zimbardo suggests, late seventeenth-century works (satirical and otherwise) are often described “as a prelude or preamble to the crowning achievements of the eighteenth century.” “Whether positively, as the soil from which the eighteenth-century masterworks in time sprouted, or negatively, as the purgatory through which English culture passed to emerge as pure Augustan gold, we have understood the period only in relation to, and continuous with, the eighteenth century.” See *At Zero Point: Discourse, Culture, and Satire in Restoration England* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 1.
of scribal publication and uncertain attribution.² I am indebted to both in my discussion here, though my focus differs from theirs. Love deals exclusively with scribally circulated satires, most of which were vituperative or subversive enough that print publication would have been imprudent—especially with an author’s name attached. English Clandestine Satire surveys and analyzes a great deal of hitherto unstudied material in helpful and exciting ways, but it does not consider these works as part of Carolean satire more broadly conceived. Juxtaposing the court, town, and state lampoons that Love includes with printed verse, prose, and dramatic satires will, I think, give us a yet fuller sense of what Carolean satire meant to its authors. Hume deals with satire across genres; he also attends to the various modes of circulation and to the availability of the works of earlier English, classical, and continental writers in Carolean England. Whereas he asks how contemporary readers and theatergoers would have understood “satire,” however, I want to ask how Carolean writers conceived of their enterprises—what satire meant to its practitioners, and why they wrote it.

Reading this period either for evidence of an ascendant “Augustan” mode or for a common “spirit of the age” has required scholars to over-emphasize similarities and to overlook inconsistencies in satiric practice. Marvell and Dryden are sometimes compared as “public poets”; both Rochester’s and Butler’s subjects are “low.” Claude Rawson claims that Oldham’s Satyrs upon the Jesuits “do to some extent anticipate Absalom and Achitophel.” ³ Jeremy W. Webster refers casually to “the nature of Restoration political satire,” ⁴ though his discussion deals almost exclusively with Rochester. If we are going to represent Carolean satire fairly, then we need to attend to its disparities as well as to its correspondences. We need also to look more fully at its authors and their works. “Carolean satire” includes hundreds upon hundreds of squibs, verse satires, character sketches, litanies, and broadsides (some of which are collected in the Yale POAS), as well as the fiercely anti-monarchical diatribes of John Ayloffe and the disgusted

social satire of Thomas Otway—and also the less-studied exemplars by canonical figures (e.g., Dryden’s *The Kind Keeper*). Hume is right to query “the degree and nature of ‘satire’ in Carolean comedy,” but some plays undoubtedly contain satirical elements, and these works have had little place in modern accounts of long eighteenth-century satire. Dryden’s *The Spanish Fryar* belongs to a discussion of Carolean satire as surely as does his *Mac Flecknoe*. A few scholars give a passing glance to Wycherley and Etherege, but *The Country-Wife* and *The Plain-Dealer* are no more relevant than Otway’s *Friendship in Fashion* or Thomas Duffett’s *The Mock-Tempest*.

Satirists in the reign of Charles II are best studied neither as a school nor as the under-developed antecedents of Pope and Swift. If we approach the material without presuppositions, what do we find? What are Carolean satirists doing with satire?

I. Some Preliminary Considerations: Realities vs. Assumptions

“Carolean satire” is messy and problematical in all sorts of ways, and, as Hume concludes, the majority of it is “remote in aim and nature from ‘Augustan satire’” as conceived by modern scholars. Carolean satires were mostly not composed at the desks of great poets and then published in nicely bound, well-annotated, definitively attributed volumes meant to be read in their moments by all and sundry and appreciated in the hereafter for their aesthetic value and transmundane moral utility. The culture of satire in this period is strikingly incommensurable with the dictates of most modern scholars, but if we are to make sense of it—and it is like nothing else before or since—then we need to try to take it on its own terms.

Why and for whom was Carolean satire written? *Absalom and Achitophel* is a grand example of highly polished literature, political satire cum biblical allegory written by a master craftsman. But equally

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6 In the major modern satire studies with which I dealt in chapter one, only five Carolean plays are mentioned by more than one critic (*The Rehearsal, The Man of Mode, The Country-Wife, The Plain-Dealer, and Venice Preserv’d*), and none gets more than a paragraph.
part of this world is _A Litany_ (wr. 1672), headed in manuscript, “These were writ in Lincoln’s Inn Boghouse/1672”—the unknown author composed his unhappy plaint in a privy. Satires were directed at diverse audiences. Dramatic satires were performed for a heterogeneous crowd, as theatre-goers did not possess identical values and assumptions then any more than they do now, and some printed material would have been taken differently by different readers. A number of satires were composed for the enjoyment of a small coterie and others to sway opinion among a broader readership; some authors are clearly writing to members of their own party and some to the opposition. The rhetorical situation—the authorial stance vis-à-vis speaker, imagined audience, mode of transmission—varies from satire to satire, and we need to read with that in mind.

Many Carolean satires were evidently written for the moment. Most of what appeared in print as “satyr” (or occasionally “satire”) was produced not as a piece of culture for posterity but for immediate consumption. Scribal verse satires, as a rule, were not solidified into print by their authors, nor were ever meant to be. The notion of plays as Literature evolved only in the late seventeenth century (no author’s name appeared on a playbill until 1699), and most audience members were unlikely to have taken dramatic satires in this period seriously as literary enterprises. Scholars in English departments tend to think of satire as a “literary” mode, but that was not the point for most Carolean satirists. What they produce is remote from the public and formal satire we find in the eighteenth century proper: “‘satire’ in the form of scribally circulated lampoons and false-imprint broadsides . . . is a very far cry from ‘satire’ in the rarefied world of Pope’s Horatian imitations or Johnson’s ‘Vanity of Human Wishes.’” Satire is assumed perforce to be connected to its moment, though critics are fond of praising its greatest exemplars for transcending particulars. “The richest satire,” says George deForest Lord, “is that which transmutes concrete historical realities into universals.” This is a fine conclusion, and certainly it applies to some

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8 See Harold Love, _Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England_. From the period 1660-1714, some 2,500 “state poems” exist only in manuscript form (_POAS-Y_, 1:xxvi).
10 Lord, _POAS-Y_, 1:li. Dustin Griffin discusses this issue usefully and at length in _Satire_, chap. 5. J. Paul Hunter asserts, more recently, that “The strength and resonance of the major satires usually derive from their
satires in the long eighteenth century (e.g., Edward Young’s *Love of Fame* series)—but it has little relevance for the majority of Carolean satirists, who seem to care not a jot about posterity. Most of these satires are ephemeral and highly topical; they are emphatically present-centered, local, circumstantial, particular, and pragmatic in terms of wishing for a negative outcome for the target. They represent a satiric enterprise different in kind from that which is basically generalized.

We need to be aware of the material realities of Carolean satiric culture. The vast majority of the Carolean satires were circulated and/or printed anonymously. Some satires appeared in printed books by single authors who were named on title pages, but a great many were published in miscellanies (whose various contributors were often either unnamed or inaccurately named) or as anonymous broadsides or pamphlets. Yet others circulated only in manuscript form, whether individually or in anthologies that were never intended for print. Rochester and Dryden are associated with satire by contemporaries—but so are Stephen College, Sir Carr Scroope, Sir Thomas Skipwith, Sir Fleetwood Sheppard, and Jack Howe. Marvell’s satires would have been known among his cohort, but not beyond it until the 1680s; Butler’s *Hudibras* was a spectacular hit but was never printed with his name on it in his lifetime; Rochester was recognized as a satirist, but what contemporaries meant by “Rochester” or “Cleveland” or “Marvell” was not what we mean by it, as those authors’ names appeared on many works not written by them. Modern readers have a drastically different concept of authorship from seventeenth-century readers and writers: texts were often presented without introduction, annotation, or even an author’s name (much

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11 For the authorship of lampoons in particular, see Love, *English Clandestine Satire*, chap. 5. Love traces patterns of circulation and attribution, pointing out, among other things, that “the bulk of the widely circulated lampoons were the work of a somewhat fractious and politically divided coterie of poets who nevertheless were in close enough touch with each other to be able to report with some authority in secondary lampoons on the authorship and circumstances of production of predecessor pieces.” He also observes that “composition was as likely to be collaborative as solitary” (176).


13 Love includes a list of “those verse references to scribbally publishing Town poets which specifically or by implication name them as writers of lampoons” (*English Clandestine Satire*, 167). The list is printed on pp. 168-70, and is useful in conveying some sense of which writers contemporaries recognized as lampoonists in the late seventeenth century.
less the correct one). The editors of the Yale POAS provide critical accoutrements that were not there originally, including extensive notes to help us make sense of the dense topical allusions and often an attribution, whether tentative or confident. No doubt some contemporaries were confounded by less-than-obvious satires, and by the time State Poems began to appear in print in 1689, few readers could have “gotten” most of the works. Both Michael McKeon and Hume highlight the potential indecipherability of the satires even to contemporaries. But most Carolean scribal satire was evidently designed for a fairly specific coterie, and I suspect that members of that audience often had a pretty good sense of what the satire was doing and to whom.14

Another problem is that critics tend to look for humor, wit, burlesque distortion, and literary imagination in satire—desiderata evidently not valued by many Carolean writers. Some of these works are funny (e.g., The Sullen Lovers and Seigneur Dildoe), but many are not leavened by wit, and plenty of satirists are not laughing at all. They are furious, disgusted, and/or terrified, and increasingly so in the 1670s and early 1680s. They are expressing profound convictions and anxieties and making arguments, though often with no hope of results. Scholars are inclined to see Carolean satire as either highly moral (following the Dryden of the Discourse) or as frivolously nasty (following Rochester at his dirtiest and most spiteful). Many of these texts are neither. Some express moral outrage (e.g., On the Three Dukes Killing the Beadle), but more are worrying about practical politics—with varying degrees of flippancy, humor, meanness, solemnity, pragmatic purpose, hope for change, personal commitment, and so on. Looking at many works by a number of writers will demonstrate the multiplicity of satiric practices in this period, none of which fits very well with modern assumptions either about “satire” or about this satire.

II. Dryden, Rochester, Buckingham

Dryden and Rochester figure prominently in most studies of “Restoration satire,” the one a happy precursor to the “Augustan” mode\(^\text{15}\) and the other a practitioner of the nasty personal lampoonery from which Dryden is at pains to dissociate proper satire in the *Discourse*. Rochester scholars now underscore the political and philosophical dimensions of that author’s work, but in common critical imagination he remains a bawdy devil to Dryden’s high-minded moralist. As the poet laureate, scholars suggest, Dryden defended his ideals about writing and addressed the monarchical succession in his satire; a misogynistic and misanthropic playboy, Rochester offered in his satire a colorful picture of Nell Gwyn laboring to arouse Charles II and a libertine’s unrestrained invective directed at his own uncooperative member. Even more than Dryden and Rochester, George Villiers, Second Duke of Buckingham, was in his day a celebrity. All three were public figures—two of them were noblemen and the third a leading Tory playwright and poet—and their satire was read by and commented on by contemporaries. What sort of satirist was each of these writers?

*Carolean Dryden: lampoonist, social commentator, propagandist*

Two important facts are worth remembering at the outset. (1) Scholars tend to read Dryden’s two most famous verse satires in terms of the high moral dictates outlined in the *Discourse*, whether they invoke that essay directly or not. The *Discourse* is a product of the 1690s, however, and its pronouncements have virtually no connection to Carolean satiric practices—including Dryden’s. (2) Our sense of Dryden’s satiric practice is derived largely from two poems, with occasional *pro forma* reference to *The Medall*.\(^\text{16}\) None of the major modern satire studies mentions a single one of his satiric plays. If we look

\(^{15}\) For example, Ronald Paulson has recently described Dryden as “the father of Augustan satire (Swift, Pope, Gay, and Fielding).” See “Dryden and the energies of satire,” in *The Cambridge Companion to John Dryden*, ed. Steven N. Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 37-58, at 37.

\(^{16}\) Recent examples include James Ogden, “Dryden’s Satirical Tendency,” *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 31 (1995): 215-22, and Paulson, “Dryden and the energies of satire.” Ogden deals only with *Mac Flecknoe* and *Absalom and Achitophel*, and Paulson claims for Dryden’s corpus “only three major satires” (37)—*The Medall* being the third.
at the totality of Dryden’s output as a Carolean satirist without trying to make him into a forebear of Pope, what do we find?

Of Dryden’s works, satire scholars have dealt all but exclusively with *Mac Flecknoe* (wr. 1676-77; 2d*) and *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681; 1s*). In order to establish Dryden as the auspicious prototype for “Augustanism,” critics tend to de-emphasize the crude lampoonery of the first poem and the partisan message of the latter. J. Paul Hunter glosses *Mac Flecknoe* in a grand manner. Dryden’s satire draws on readers’ traditional expectations of rational intelligence, orderly procedures, mentorship, monarchical succession, Judeo-Christian body-spirit dichotomies and England’s (and London’s) superiority over “northern,” Irish and “barbarian” cultures to create a sense of displaced and perverted social and political order in contemporary literary taste and the reward system.\(^{17}\)

This description is not exactly untrue, but it is misleading. Literary critics who know something of Dryden’s convictions can undoubtedly perceive such a noble aim in *Mac Flecknoe*, but that contemporaries felt its author was drawing on their beliefs about “body-spirit dichotomies” I very much doubt. Dryden has strong feelings about writing, scholars insist, and in heaping derogation on Shadwell he is making an object lesson of what he regards as a bad example. While James Anderson Winn is right to argue that *Mac Flecknoe* “measures its victim’s inflated claims to literary excellence against the more permanent standards of the epic tradition,” his contention that it “transcends the personal irritations that prompted it” is over-generous.\(^{18}\) Dryden’s ridicule of Shadwell clearly has more genuine animosity behind it than had Shadwell’s portrait of Sir Robert Howard in *The Sullen Lovers*, but he is essentially demeaning a personal enemy and an author whose theory of writing he means to belittle. As Hume reminds us, *Mac Flecknoe* is “an ugly personal smear” whose “original context was that of a town lampoon—scribally circulated, anonymous, venomously personal abuse.”\(^{19}\) If *Mac Flecknoe* had been

\(^{17}\) Hunter, “Political, satirical, didactic and lyric poetry,” 189.
\(^{19}\) Hume, “‘Satire’ in the Reign of Charles II,” 344. Dryden would say in the *Discourse* that lampoonery is “for the most part Unlawful,” concluding solemnly that, “We have no Moral right on the Reputation of other Men” (*Works*, 4:59). The author of *Mac Flecknoe*, however, clearly had a great deal of fun besmirching his target—and he does not appear to have been fussed about his “Moral right” to do so.
written by Sir Carr Scroope, I daresay scholars would not exalt its author’s creditable motives but would
sneer at his dirty pool, and even lament that he had not followed Dryden’s model.

*Absalom and Achitophel* has more overt positives than does *Mac Flecknoe*, whose positives are
only implicit, and it also has considerably more force. However controlled this poem is, its satire reflects
considerable anxiety on Dryden’s part. He is defending Tory patriarchalism and right order: “What
Prudent men a settled Throne woud shake?” (*Works*, 2, l. 796). Narcissus Luttrell’s inscription tells us,
the poem is written both “agt ye Duke of Monmouth, Earl of Shaftsbury & that party,” and also “in
vindicacon of the King & his freinds.”

It is not only attack. Nevertheless, as in *Mac Flecknoe*, here he
goes after individuals, and, as Hume observes, contemporaries would have understood *Absalom and
Achitophel* as part of “the harsh world of political combat and personal abuse—anonymous, partisan
expression of contempt and hostility intended to damage the target in the eye of the beholder.”

Dryden’s poem is propaganda, and his character sketches are invidious, facts sometimes lost in honeyed
descriptions of the father of “Augustan” satire’s preeminent work: “Its art everywhere mixes the comic
and the grand; every corner, even its most wicked moment, is transformed by an incomparable style and
by a perfect sense of timing, by rhythms and rhymes handled with a most telling exactness, and by an
irony that suffuses the whole.” Like Hunter’s construal of *Mac Flecknoe*, this account of *Absalom and
Achitophel* is technically true but not really relevant to any discussion of Dryden’s satire in its contexts.
The brilliance of Dryden’s artistry is why we read the poem now, but that most of the work’s original
readers would have privileged technique over substance seems unlikely.

Like *Absalom and Achitophel*, *The Medall* (1682; 6d*) is Tory propaganda, this time by way of
frontal assault. Because it is direct and unrestrained invective, most students of “Augustan satire” have
disregarded it. Phillip Harth has insisted that the satire has a sophisticated agenda and has criticized those
who read it as lacking poise—that is, as a reflection of its author’s alarm at Shaftesbury’s acquittal. As a

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satire, Harth explains, *The Medall* “seeks to discredit the Whigs and diminish their importance in order to forestall the revival of popular fears.” Dryden is keen to suggest “that the Whigs have been crushed and scattered as an effective political force capable of disturbing the peace by the king’s actions of the previous year and by the revelations of their infamy that followed.” Absalom and Achitophel is purposely calm, and, as Harth convincingly argues, *The Medall*’s tone is no less a deliberate rhetorical maneuver closely tied to the satire’s political agenda. Both satires are careful, well-crafted enterprises written out of real conviction by a master poet, but they are also aggressively partisan polemics meant to influence current events. They are just as meant to blacken individuals in political warfare as is something like the anonymous *Wiltshire Ballad* (1680), a snappy Tory broadside briskly recounting the treachery of the radicals of the ’40s in order to indict the current Whigs and to raise the specter of civil war.

Dryden’s satirical plays of the early 1680s have clear political resonance. In the sub-plot of *The Spanish Fryar* (1680; pub. 1681), Dryden pillories friar Dominic, an unscrupulous Catholic priest. In the serious plot, he associates the Whigs with the radicals of the 1640s, suggesting the dangers of rebelling against proper authority by presenting us with “a fable about the evils of tampering with the legitimate succession.” The caricature of friar Dominic also has political import: Whigs very loudly accused Tories of being Catholic sympathizers, and the Tory playwright here dissociates himself and his party from Catholic perfidy. But, as Harth points out, Dryden is also eager to draw a crowd, and jeering at an easy

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24 Michael Wilding has rightly insisted that, “Dryden’s political satires were political instruments. Whatever literary qualities we may admire in them, we need to remember their manipulative, political intent, their McCarthyite smearing.” See “Dryden and Satire: ‘Mac Flecknoe, Absalom and Achitophel, the Medall,’ and Juvenal,” in *John Dryden*, ed. Earl Miner (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1972), 191-233, at 210.

25 A similar attack is made by Alexander Radcliffe in *The Lawyers’ Demurrer Argued* (1681), which accuses the Whigs—“spawn of some rebels in year Forty-One”—of irreverence and insubordination (l.3); see also *A Loyal Satyr against Whiggism* (1682; 1d*) and Thomas Durfey’s *The Whig’s Exaltation* (1682).

(and popular) target is one way to do so. Unlike *The Spanish Fryar*, Dryden and Nat Lee’s *The Duke of Guise* (banned in July 1682 but permitted in November) is a parallel play. It is a nasty application satire insinuating that the Duke of Monmouth is a dangerous rogue who deserves to be killed—a touchy point to make about the king’s favorite bastard. The Whigs screamed bloody murder, suggesting that they made the application; their response prompted Dryden to publish a 60-page justification in which he claimed that the play is a piece of French history with no bearing on contemporary events. The manifest disingenuousness of this defense might make us reconsider the seriousness with which we take the high-minded pieties of the *Discourse*. Whatever Dryden’s protests, *The Duke of Guise* is an exemplar of overt political didacticism with brutally clear contemporary application.

Two of Dryden’s Carolean satirical plays are not party pieces but social commentaries. The comic plot of *Marriage A-la-Mode* (1671; pub. 1673) presents an unhappy image of married life—the imminent union of Palamede and Melantha, arranged by parents for purely economic reasons, is dreaded by both parties; the already-wed Rhodophil and Doralice are mutually dissatisfied. Conjugal bliss or even lasting contentment appears impossible for these couples, but the possessive instinct prevents the men from resolving to create an “open” relationship (both women available to both men, and vice versa).

“The clear implication” of the play, Hume argues, “is that marriage is unsatisfactory but that people must make the best of what they cannot change. This is more than merely ‘cynical’: it is sad, serious, and wry, a skeptical and unhappy comment on the human condition.” The play’s gloomier undercurrents are undeniable, but, as Hume points out, most contemporary audience members apparently ignored them, content to enjoy the show. In *The Reformation* (1672; pub. 1673), Joseph Arrowsmith criticized Dryden’s spicy comedy, raising moral objections to the picture of sexual freedom presented in *Marriage A-la-Mode*.

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28 As Winn explains, “The conclusion, in which Guise is stabbed by eight assassins, had to be painful for any Whig, and the counterattack was swift: Whig partisans in the audience hissed the performances, and two printed attacks appeared before the play was even published” (John Dryden and His World, 381).
29 Dryden, *The Vindication: or the Parallel of the French Holy-League and the English League and Covenant, Turn’d into a Seditious Libell against the King and his Royal Highness* (1683; published in *Works*, 14.
A-la-Mode. The Kind Keeper; or, Mr. Limberham (1678; pub. 1680)—which Dryden called “an honest Satyre against our crying sin of Keeping”—also addresses social issues, but unlike Marriage A-la-Mode it is a romp.31 In the earlier play, Dryden’s judgment is clear enough; The Kind Keeper is much zippier and more farcical, and righteous anger is hard to locate in what Hume has called “perhaps the most cheerfully indecent of all Carolean comedies.”32 Marriage A-la-Mode is not trying to influence current events and is not, as far as I can tell, earnestly urging moral or social reform, though Arrowsmith’s attack on its immorality is somewhat unfair. The earlier play has substance; The Kind Keeper is a salacious farce.

Scholars tend to take Dryden very seriously as a straitlaced theorist of satire. They privilege Mac Flecknoe (usually assumed to have transcended the realm of personal abuse) and Absalom and Achitophel (puffed as a poised defense of monarchical succession). But the former—while definitely concerned with theory of writing—is a lampoon, and a fairly vulgar one at that. The latter was written in support of something Dryden very much believed in, but it contains enough personal invective that John Dennis denied its status as “satire”; he described both Mac Flecknoe and Absalom and Achitophel as “Libels which have pass’d for Satires.”33 These two poems, moreover, do not complete Dryden’s satiric corpus. While Harth is probably right to underscore the purposiveness of Dryden’s evident indignation in The Medall, it is ultimately a partisan invective. The Spanish Fryar trashes an obvious political butt, albeit for religio-political reasons. The Kind Keeper is smut, plain and simple, as Dryden well knew. He explicitly acknowledged the influence on it of Durfey’s A Fond Husband, a roistering, farcical sex comedy staged in May 1677.34 It is in a different universe from Absalom and Achitophel, and if scholars admit the poem but exclude the play in their discussions of Dryden as satirist, then the results are necessarily skewed.

The author of the Discourse might well be able to justify a solemn biblical allegory written in defense of king and country—but how would he have defended The Kind Keeper? I doubt that he could have made

31 The quotation comes from the play’s dedication (Works, 14:5).
32 Hume, Development, 331.
34 Dryden described The Kind Keeper as “almost such another piece of businesse as the fond Husband, for such the King will have it, who is parcell poet with me in the plott.” See The Letters of John Dryden, ed. Charles E. Ward (1942; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1965), No. 5 (c. July 1677).
any of his Carolean satires, even the verse, conform to the grandiose dictates he so assuredly set forth in 1693. Dryden as Carolean satirist is not the venerable father of a moralizing “Augustan” mode: he is prepared to attack standard targets to increase the popularity of his plays; he is partisan and polemical; and he is willing and able to smear individuals sans any apparent reformative objectives.

Rochester: skeptical, provocative, negative

Rochester’s satires are difficult to characterize. They tend to be defined by what he disapproves of and objects to, rather than by what he is supporting; he is, as Dustin H. Griffin says, “better at attacking than proposing an ideal.” 35 He is frequently disgusted, often violent, sometimes playful. The nature of attack is not uniform: his satire ranges from frivolous abuse (On Poet Ninny) to incisive self-parody (To the Post Boy) to politicized personal defamation (In the Isle of Brittain) to sharp articulation of misanthropy (A Satyre against Reason and Mankind) to aggressively thought-provocative expression of epistemological doubt (Upon Nothinge).

Some of Rochester’s satires are straightforward. His account of contemporary authors in An Allusion to Horace 10 Sat: 1st Book (1675-76?) distinguishes decisively between the commendable (including, inter alia, Shadwell, Wycherley, Butler, and Buckingham) and the obnoxious (especially Dryden, but also Crowne, Settle, Otway, Lee, and others). 36 In his lampoons on individual writers, he likewise leaves little doubt as to the verdict being passed. 37 In On The Suppos’d Author of A late Poem in Defence of Satyr and On Poet Ninny, he nastily bludgeons Sir Carr Scroope as a vain but ugly and insufferably untalented writer. 38 In My Lord All-pride, he does the same to Mulgrave, calling into

36 Marianne Thormählen discusses this poem at length, detailing the criteria by which Rochester assesses his contemporaries; Rochester: The Poems in Context (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 319-36.
37 Griffin challenges what he suggests is too simplistic a reading of these satires, arguing that their playfulness should not be disregarded; see Satire, 92-93.
38 Scroope took offense: to On The Suppos’d Author, he replied with Answer By way of Epigram, encouraging the “feeble scribler” to “Sitt swelling in thy hole like a vex’d Toad, / And full of pox, and Mallice, spitt abroad” (ll. 1, 3-4).
question that author’s talent, intelligence, sexual prowess, and masculinity. Mulgrave is also targeted in *A very heroical epistle in answer to Ephelia* and in *An Epistolary Essay, from M.G. to O.B. upon their mutuall Poems*, in which he himself is made the speaker, revealing his own loathsome vanity and absurdity—“In my dear self, I center every thing” (*A very heroical epistle* [l. 7]). Marianne Thormählen is right to highlight the contrast between the clear-cut diatribe of *My Lord All-pride* and “the carefully wrought ironies of the two ‘epistles,’” but these are withering condemnations delivered with bold assurance. Just as resolutely acerbic are Rochester’s cutting impromptus on the Duchess of Cleveland, Etherege, and other court personages, including the king:

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God bless our good and gracious King
    Whose promise none relyes on,
     Who never said A foolish thing
     Nor ever did A wise one.
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The epitaph stings, but not so much as the critically renowned “scepter lampoon,” the earl’s ruthlessly and obscenely derogatory attack on Charles II. The tirade is manifestly personal (Rochester clearly loathes the man he is describing) but also political. The sexual adventures of the “merry Monarch” endanger the state. To abuse this “easiest” of kings is to challenge his administrative conduct, and Rochester obviously associates Charles’s promiscuity with major governmental failings. Not content merely to jeer at Nell Gwyn’s “Implying Hands, Armes, Fingers, Mouth and Thighs / To raise the Limb which shee

39 Many Carolean literary satires name names. Some focus exclusively on a single writer, as in a trio of satires on Edward Howard—Charles Sackville, Lord Buckhurst’s *On Mr. Edward Howard upon his British Princes* (wr. 1669), Edmund Ashton’s *On the Same Author upon His British Princes* (wr. 1669), and the anonymous *On the Same Author upon his New Utopia* (wr. 1671); Buckingham also satirized *The Brittish Princes* in a short poem called on these 2 *V. of Mr Howards*. Other literary satires in this period are shotgun attacks on multiple authors, as in *Advice to Apollo* (wr. 1677) and *The Session of the Poets* (dated 1668 by Lord in POAS-Y but probably wr. 1664), which has some truly nasty moments—the author jeers, for example, that Buckingham “wish’d his play as well clapp’d as his Grace” (l. 20).


41 All quotations of Rochester’s poetry are from *The Works of John Wilmot Earl of Rochester*, ed. Harold Love (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). Love collects the “impromptus” (pp. 289-301), including ten versions of the lines on Charles II; I quote the third version (p. 292).

each Night enjoyes,” he concludes, “I hate all Monarchs and the Thrones that they sitt on.”

The satirist’s values regarding this particular monarch at this particular historical moment are unmistakable—he is passing judgment.

Rochester does not always pronounce with the same confident clarity. Critics have wrangled over the meaning of The Disabled Debauchee, in which the libertine speaker gaily and proudly affirms his own debauchery. How are we to interpret the speaker’s values, and how much do they share with the poet’s? What is being satirized here, and with how much conviction? Thormählen asserts that scholars who read uncertainty into this text do so because they “naturally expect any poem by the notorious Rochester to defend debauchery,” but argues that, “Judged on its own terms,” this satire “paints a forbidding picture of the pursuit, and the consequences, of riotous living.” She takes this poem and To the Post Boy as evidence that the earl was no hypocrite, that he could admit the problems of dissolute libertinism and denounce it. Critical discord suggests, however, that the satiric argument of these works is not wholly transparent.

Some of Rochester’s other satires are likewise complex, and though the targets are clear the works have generated conflicting readings. The persona/speaker contemptuously describes a despicable state of affairs in A Ramble in St. James’s Park, which ends with his imagining getting his vengeance on the false Corinna by ruining her future marriage. The speaker of the Letter from Artemiza in the Towne to Chloe in the Countrey complains to her correspondent that love no longer exists in the world. Tunbridge Wells attacks various types of individuals and vices, “The Rendevous of fooles, Buffoons, and

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43 Love includes several versions of the “scepter” lampoon (In the Isle of Brittain); my quotations come from his “Group-A text,” ll. A22, A4, A31-33 (pp. 85-86).
44 Thormählen, Rochester, 14.
45 David M. Vieth explains this poem as an haughty example to Rochester’s adversaries of how he could be vilified. See Attribution in Restoration Poetry: A Study of Rochester’s Poems of 1680 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), 202-03. Love calls the satire a “morbid piece of self-parody” (English Clandestine Satire, 59).
46 Thormählen treats A Ramble in St. James’s Park in conjunction with The Imperfect Enjoyment, but, she observes, the Ramble is a more unsettling poem: “Expostulations directed against one’s own recalcitrant penis are, of course, more likely to make a comic impact than the grim determination to wreck the life of another human being” (Rochester, 95). Howard D. Weinbrot emphasizes the devastating sadness of the Letter from Artemisia, maintaining that Rochester’s satire is gloomier than either Swift’s Tale or even the final Dunciad. See “The Swelling Volume: The Apocalyptic Satire of Rochester’s Letter from Artemisia In The Town to Chloe In The Country,” Studies in the Literary Imagination 5 (1972): 19-37, at 21.
Praters, / Cuckolds, whores, Citizens, their wives and daughters” (ll. 4-5). The speaker surveys the corruption and folly all around him—but he does not pretend to be better than his targets.47

These works are plenty negative, as are *A Satyre against Reason and Mankind* and *Upon Nothinge*. At the end of the former, Rochester admits the hypothetical possibility of men leading decent, rational lives (“If upon Earth there dwell such God-like men”), but the poem’s finale is grim. There is a definite sting in the tail: “If such there be,” he concludes, then “Man differs more from Man, than Man from Beast” (220, 224, 225). In *Upon Nothinge*, Rochester ridicules human pretensions and the vanity of attempts to understand the world. He satirizes *ex nihilo* theories of creation and derides “the wise,” those speculative philosophers who arrogantly “Enquire, defyne, distinguish, teach, devise,” attempting to explain such a process (ll. 28-29). Whereas the *Satyre against Reason* “criticizes certain notions and doctrines,” Thormählen suggests, *Upon Nothinge* “asserts that there is no foundation for any doctrine at all.”48 That sounds heavy—but late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century commentators referred to *Upon Nothinge* as they might a trifle. Rochester’s “little poem” shows “admirable fertility of invention,” consists of “a tissue of clever conceits,” reflects “novelty of thought,” is alternately “grave” and “playful.”49 Most scholars have found bitter pessimism in the *Satyre against Reason*, but A. D. Cousins suggests conversely that it “might well be, in effect, Rochester’s attempt to locate, within the world of Charles’s failed rule, a basis for a genuine restoration of order to the individual and society.”50 Is the *Satyre* grimly hopeless or (as Cousins implies) tentatively affirmative? Is *Upon Nothinge* playfully skeptical or despairing? Is Artemiza a satiric butt or spokeswoman? Does she constitute a moral norm?

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47 As Griffin points out, “All men are fools; there are no models of rational behavior,” and the libertine speaker “gives us no reason not to think him as ridiculous as the rest of humanity” (*Satires Against Man*, 46).
48 Thormählen, *Rochester*, 148. She explains *Upon Nothinge* as “a satire against the delusions, conceitedness, stupidity and faithlessness that characterize the operations of people of consequence in public life” (161).
That Rochester is passing judgment is clear, and his targets are usually readily discernible, but in these satires he is doing more than rendering a verdict.

What does all of this indicate about Rochester’s concept of satire? I offer three conclusions as a partial answer to that question. (1) His satire has range, and is best discussed not as a uniform whole but from exemplar to exemplar. The works differ not only in subject matter but in tone, intensity, and purpose. (2) We tend to think of strong satire as written from the conviction that the author knows right from wrong, as in the case of Rochester’s straightforward invectives: in *On Poet Ninny*, for instance, he delivers his verdict clearly and confidently. But the provocative nature of works like *Upon Nothinge* and *A Ramble* differentiates them from direct attack. Cocksure rubbing of Sir Carr Scroope’s literary merit and appearance is one thing; evaluating the morality of libertinism in a corrupt society is quite another. (3) The interpretation of some of Rochester’s works depends to a considerable extent upon the expectations a reader brings to them. I suspect that a moralizer would denounce in *The Imperfect Enjoyment* what an unabashed libertine would only find amusing, and *Upon Nothinge* can be read either as unsettling and upsetting or as teasingly clever. Rochester appears, at least some of the time, to be writing for very different types of readers—those who will be shocked, either for aesthetic or ethical reasons (because the work is crude or because it is morally objectionable), those who can/will be entertained by it, those who might agree with the grim picture presented, and so on. Authorial contexts can help modern critics make surer guesses about the objects of these satires and the attitude of the satirist, but a contemporary reader would probably have reacted according to his or her own disposition.

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51 Griffin’s emphasis on satire as inquiry and/or provocation is especially useful for Rochester: as Griffin explains, this concept “enables us to see more clearly that satire is often an ‘open’ rather than a ‘closed’ form, that it is concerned rather to inquire, explore, or unsettle than to declare, sum up, or conclude” (*Satire*, 95).

52 Rochester’s readership extended beyond his coterie, as Love explains: “poems written to wound enemies or to further his position at court would have failed in their aim if they had never spread beyond his own intimates.” Love also cites Rochester’s conversations with Burnet, which suggest that the Earl meant his lampoons “not merely to amuse his friends but to mortify his victims, something which could only happen if they were made generally available at Whitehall” (*Scribal Publication*, 247, and n.37). John E. Sitter argues that Rochester tries “to resist solidarity with the reader” of his satires, constantly subverting readers’ ability to make sense of the works; “Rochester’s Reader and the Problem of Satiric Audience,” *Papers on Language & Literature* 12 (1976): 285-98, at 287. Sitter’s discussion is useful in helping us understand that Rochester deliberately alienates some of his readers—but this alienation is not uniform. I would point out that not all of these works are written exclusively for those who will be shocked.
Readers of *Absalom and Achitophel* might respond differently depending on their political leanings, but there can be of little doubt of Dryden’s central thrust or the commitment behind it. Rochester’s more provocative satires are another matter; they seem, as Umberto Eco would say, partially “open” rather than entirely “closed.” Rochester leaves us asking questions more often than Dryden, Marvell, Buckingham, or Oldham.

**Buckingham’s purposive satire**

Satire scholars who mention Buckingham usually have only *The Rehearsal* (1671; pub. 1672) in mind. The most conspicuous satiric butt, at least in the 1671 version, is John Dryden, though the duke also parodies a number of recognizable scenes from contemporary plays (by Dryden and others) and from plays staged as early as late 1663, when Buckingham evidently began to work on *The Rehearsal.* How serious was Buckingham in his attack? “Many scholars have assumed that *The Rehearsal* was written out of genuine indignation and in the hope of driving heroic drama off the London stage,” Hume and Love point out—but they express well-founded dubiety that Buckingham had any such object in mind. His play was produced by the King’s Company; Dryden was its leading playwright and a shareholder; *Tyrannick Love* and *The Conquest of Granada*, exemplars of the heroic drama satirized in *The Rehearsal*, had been major successes. We cannot realistically believe that the King’s Company managers would have enthusiastically presented a satire intended to destroy the popularity of their principal playwright or of their stock plays.

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55 Hume and Love, *Plays, Poems, and Miscellaneous Writings associated with . . . Buckingham*, 1:347. Zwicker’s reading of the play is of the sort Hume and Love are challenging: “Buckingham aimed to deflate the pretensions of the heroic drama and to undermine the ideological programme of personal grandeur and political absolutism sponsored by that drama. Though Buckingham’s assault did not much diminish the commercial appeal of heroic drama, *The Rehearsal*, with its mimicry of Dryden’s mannerisms, surely tarnished his personal reputation” (“Dryden and the Poetic Career,” 149).
The dramatic burlesques of Thomas Duffett make a useful contrast to Buckingham’s most famous satire. *The Mock-Tempest, or the Enchanted Castle* (1674; pub. 1675) and *Psyche Debauch’d* (1675; pub. 1678) are terrific single-play travesties produced by the King’s Company—parodying Shadwell’s revision of the Dryden-Davenant operatic *Tempest* and his *Psyche*, both staged by the Duke’s Company. Relocating the original plots in a world of bawds and prostitutes, Duffett’s plays are nastily funny and lewd. They are also hostile. Buckingham’s burlesque of heroic drama is not sympathetic, but it is different in kind from Duffett’s slashing travesties of Shadwell. There is a fair chance that the King’s Company wanted to do real harm to the Duke’s Company, even as they capitalized on the latter’s successes. That Buckingham had anything like this objective in mind for *The Rehearsal* is highly improbable.

Buckingham’s satire is often at least as political as it is personal. The literary satire of *The Rehearsal* needs to be appreciated in its own right, but it should also be seen as a camouflage for political satire on Arlington. Arlington is directly and savagely satirized in *Aduice to a Paynter, to draw the Delineaments of a Statesman, and his Vnderlings*. The physical description of the “arrant Fopp” is acid:

> Giue him a meane proud Garbe, a dapper pace,  
> A pert dull Grinn, a black Patch crosse his Face,  
> Two goggle Eyes soe cleare, though very dead,  
> That one may see through them quite through his Head.  
> Let eu’ry Nod of his, and little winke  
> Declare, the Foole would speake, but cannot thinke.  
> Let him all other Fooles soe farre surpasse,  
> That Fooles themselves poynat at him for an Asse. (ll. 1, 3-10)

This is character assassination with no pretense of fairness, but it is directed at a political figure who mattered. Buckingham’s *Aduice to a Paynter* has little in common with Marvell’s “Painter” poems, which are not nearly so personal and which make their positive political agenda much more explicit. In

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Upon the Installment, of Sir [Thomas] Os[bor]n, and the Late Duke of New-castle, as well as in A Song on Thomas Earl of Danby, Buckingham excoriates a former protégé turned rival. The description of Danby is vicious—“You’re such a scurvy, stinking, Errant Knight, / That when you speak a Man would swear you S[hi]te” (Upon the Installment, ll.70-71)—but to detract from the man Thomas Osborne is to damage the reputation of the Earl of Danby, with whom Buckingham fought fiercely over issues of dissent and toleration. This is a radically different enterprise from a work like An Heroic Poem (wr. 1681), in which the satirist’s hostility is directed at Whig politicians rather than at their principles. The anonymous author of that poem, as John Harold Wilson explains, “seems to have been motivated more by spite than by moral or political indignation.” The same cannot be said of these attacks on Danby, vindictively mean-spirited though they are.

Although Buckingham’s The Cabbin-Boy and The Ducks are snapshots, and much less substantial than the Danby poems, they do convey quite an unflattering picture of the king. I quote the latter in full:

> Whilst in the State all things look smooth and Fair,  
> Ile dabble up and down and take the Ayr.  
> But the first appearance of foul Weather,  
> I and my Ducks will quack away together.

Charles’s attitude toward governing is not what it should be, and, as in The Cabbin-Boy, the implication is that the leader of the country might have had better things to do with his time. These satires excoriate individuals, to be sure, and Buckingham is capable of personal denunciation, but his motives are rarely only personal.

Although many scholars are inclined to define satire in negative terms, most of Buckingham’s satires have a positive political agenda. They are written as much “for” a cause as they are “against” a person. Buckingham’s main contribution to his and Sir Robert Howard’s The Country Gentleman (scheduled for production in 1669 but banned) is the table scene, which was obviously meant to demean


59 Wilson, Court Satires of the Restoration (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1976), 68.
well-known political figures, especially Sir William Coventry. It succeeded brilliantly. Coventry tried and failed to get the play suppressed, but managed to prevent its being staged by threatening to have the actor’s nose cut. Incensed by gossip, he challenged the duke to a duel; Buckingham tattled to the king, who promptly dismissed Coventry from his Treasury job, to Buckingham’s and Howard’s immense satisfaction. In addition to its political satire, The Country Gentleman also targets businessmen, fops, Francophilia in England—it has, in other words, a clear set of negatives. But it is simultaneously an ideological, pro-Country party play with an implicit set of positives.

Some of the duke’s lesser known works likewise have strongly positive agendas. In a short dialogue skit called The Militant Couple, he argues that certain kinds of mistreatment will lead to domestic discord and even to justifiable cuckolding. While the piece includes some comic bits, it is not just a droll portrayal of marital friction. The satire advocates a standard of civility and courtesy; the point is not attack. The 1685 skit The French Generall is another exercise in purposive detraction, this time of the Earl of Feversham, whom James imprudently put in charge of the royalist army in 1685, and who well-nigh bungled the Battle of Sedgemoor. The general is justly lambasted as pompous, incompetent, and uncomprehending, but this is not idle lampoonery: Buckingham is making a critical point about James’s ability to govern the country. In a dialogue entitled An Account of a Conference. between His Grace George, late Duke of Buckingham, and Father Fitzgerald an Irish Priest, “Buckingham” guns for Catholic sympathizers, including the king. He ridicules transubstantiation in a way that calls the whole Catholic religion into question. The piece is a tall tale with a fair amount of humor and a stinging critique of intolerant religions that rely on blind faith and belief in miracles. It is also a hard-edged argument for toleration written just after James II’s accession, a time of contentious debate about the official attitude

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60 For a full account of the suppression of the play and Coventry’s disgrace, see Hume and Love, Plays, Poems, and Miscellaneous Writings associated with . . . Buckingham, 1:231-38.


62 What role Buckingham actually had in the composition of these works is impossible to determine. The standard edition includes those texts known to be “by” or partially by Buckingham, but also works “associated with” him. Where authorship is completely uncertain, I use quotation marks (“Buckingham”).
toward religion. These satires are written “against” something, to be sure, but they also uphold, and are perhaps primarily designed to uphold, the positive principles that Buckingham consistently champions.

Among the satiric works “associated with” Buckingham, the oddity is *Sir Politick Would-be* (wr. c.1662-65), a play written in French in collaboration with Saint-Évremond and d’Aubigny. *Sir Politick* is set in Venice, where two scheming foreign travelers (the English Sir Politick and the Monsieur de Riche-Source) are mistaken for conspirators against the Venetian Republic, arrested, identified as harmless lunatics whose venture is strictly fantastic, and released. Meanwhile, their wives—roundly mocked for their social pretensions and self-importance—resolve to rescue the Venetian women from their captivity, to show them a good time. They plan a ball for the Dogesse and the Senators’ wives, but the mischievous railleur (Tancred) and his friend instead bring “a madam and a few of her girls” who impersonate the honored guests. Sir Politick, Monsieur de Riche-Source, and their wives all have grand notions of themselves and singularly little grip on reality. Tancred’s description of Sir Politick and Monsieur de Riche-Source convinces the senators that the projectors are simply fools: the pair consists, he explains, of “an English knight, whom books on politics have made mad,” and “a chimerical Frenchman who seeks to establish the Circulation of gold and make it return to the very place from which it set out, after it has gone around the world” (397).

*Sir Politick* is markedly unlike much early- to mid-1660s satire. It has debts to a small number of English plays (including *Volpone*), but as H. Gaston Hall and Wallace Kirsop point out, it is very much in line with seventeenth-century French comedy as practiced by Jean Desmarets, Molière, and Corneille. The French influence on English satire is clearest in the realm of farce—see *The London Cuckolds*—but *Sir Politick* represents a direction in which English satire could have gone. Its mockery of presumptuous gentlemen is unusual in the mid-sixties; slightly later, Buckingham and Howard would return to this

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63 These works are printed in *Plays, Poems, and Miscellaneous Writings associated with . . . Buckingham* (*The Militant Couple* at 2:70; *The French Generall* at 2:109; and *An Account of a Conference* at 2:120).

64 I quote from H. Gaston Hall’s English translation of the play, printed as Appendix V (at 2:341) of *Plays, Poems, and Miscellaneous Writings associated with . . . Buckingham*. The quotation is at p. 380.

theme in *The Country Gentleman*, but not much such satire was being written in this decade. Monsieur de Riche-Source’s “Circulation” scheme would have had topical relevance in the early- to mid-1660s, as the editors explain, and this play’s commentary on political and economic philosophy is also strange in the contexts of early Carolean satiric drama. *Sir Politick* is full of “would-bes”—almost everyone is vain, assuming, and self-congratulatory—and totally lacks a positive plot line. The *raisonneur*, Tancred, is a sensible chap and the play’s voice of reason, but he is also a detached observer, a bored and supercilious commentator on the action. The last lines of the play are his (solus), and his acerbic judgment well captures the impression with which *Sir Politick* leaves us: “They are entertaining for a while, but in the end become boring; and thank God I am now rid of them” (399).

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I will state the obvious: Dryden, Rochester, and Buckingham do very different things in satire. Dryden is a defender of the status quo. He supports the extant power structure and ridicules what he perceives to be threats to that order—people with subversive social views; Catholic priests (at least prior to his conversion); scabby men who keep mistresses whom they cannot satisfy in bed; writers unworthy of the honors bestowed on them. Rochester, in sharp contradistinction, is not supportive but bitterly contemptuous of the power structure in place, and he is profoundly skeptical of the epistemological basis on which that structure claims to rest. Buckingham’s satire almost always has a political dimension; Dryden’s satire sometimes does; Rochester is hardly as “apolitical” as he has sometimes been called, but he is certainly not addressing current affairs in anything like the same way as Dryden, Buckingham, or Marvell. Buckingham might have written a work like *Mac Flecknoe*, but he would not have done so when Dryden did—that is, at a time when its political implications were nil. Rochester and Buckingham are noblemen, close friends, and political allies; both support religious toleration for Protestant dissenters,

66 For a detailed explanation of the “Circulation” scheme and the topical satire it implies, see the editors’ note on II.iv.46, at 1:597-98.
criticize Charles II as a negligent monarch, sneer at Dryden as a fatuous and arrogant blowhard, and lead outrageous personal lives. Similar satirists, however, they are not. Both Rochester and Buckingham can be nastily abusive of their targets, but on the whole the earl is a much more negative, much more skeptical, satirist than the duke. Dryden has implicit positives; many of Buckingham’s satires seem better understood in terms of what they are “for” rather than what they are “against”; Rochester usually denies us even the faintest hope for something worth defending.

Critics have largely ignored Buckingham, and they have quite rightly been inclined to stress radical incongruities between Rochester and Dryden. The differences between the two are manifest in personal, political, and literary terms. They are often presented as a tidy binary, the one crude and rough and the other serious and respectable: “Dryden reflects the heroic impulses of the age,” Griffin has asserted, “and Rochester the anti-heroic.” But just where do we locate the heroic impulses of *The Kind Keeper*? Rochester is capable of pointed philosophical critique, and Dryden the satirist can be smutty, vulgar, and unfair. They are neither satiric bedfellows nor foils for one another. Dryden, Rochester, and Buckingham are surely three of the most brilliant satirists of the later seventeenth century, but if we are looking for commonalities in targets, motives, positives, or technique we discover little to point to. I have grouped them to underscore their individual range and the striking degree of their collective differences. No “Restoration mode” is to be found here.

### III. Marvell, Ayloffe, Oldham

Dryden, Rochester, and Buckingham were celebrities with high visibility and public reputations. Marvell and especially Ayloffe espoused more subversive political principles, but did not have anything like celebrity status. Neither Marvell nor Oldham printed his satires in his lifetime; both Ayloffe’s and

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68 Griffin, *Satires Against Man*, 303.
69 See Nicholas von Maltzahn, “Marvell’s Ghost,” in *Marvell and Liberty*, ed. Warren Chernaik and Martin Dzelzains (London: Macmillan, 1999), 50-74, at 56: “Marvell’s small reputation as a poet can be contrasted with that of Rochester, whose poetry scribally and in print found such wide circulation and also attribution. Marvell had nothing like such popularity, and nothing like such an identity as a poet or a protagonist in his poetry.”
Marvell’s canons remain at least partially uncertain. Love uses “Marvellian” to refer (tentatively) to “state satire that was either attributed to Marvell at the time, written under his influence, or reflects views with which he probably concurred.” Although Ayloffe was a political ally and personal associate of Marvell’s—and while Marvell “probably concurred,” at least after a fashion, with the views Ayloffe expressed in his satire—the two represent significantly different kinds of hard-core political commentators. Oldham is another patriotic Protestant, but, although his satires are not apolitical, he rarely directly treats affairs of state in them, and he departs considerably from Marvell and Ayloffe in satiric focus, technique, and purpose.

Marvell as polemical satirist

Marvell’s satires have received comparatively little critical attention. Uncertainty about attribution has made some scholars reluctant to deal with them, but, as Love explains, that accounts for only a small part of the neglect. Even The Last Instructions, always accepted as Marvell’s, has had little discussion, “perhaps because its views are regarded as too patent and outspoken for a poet otherwise admired for his ‘ambivalently suspended meanings.’” Marvell’s satirical verses are not as lyrical as his lyrics; the elusive poet of An Horatian Ode gives everything away in the satires. He is a not very subtle political writer whose satire is basically pragmatic. He makes arguments, and while they are sometimes clever and often hostile, neither cleverness nor hostility is their object.

Marvell does not write purely “personal” satire. Flecknoe, an English Priest at Rome (wr. 1646?; pub. 1681) is perhaps his most defamatory attack on an individual (the titular character has “gouty

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70 Love, English Clandestine Satire, 105.
72 Annabel Patterson is mildly defensive about the neglect of Marvell’s satires, which “have been treated with various combinations of wariness and distaste.” She complains that even the best of these works have “damaged” his “reputation for delicacy of mind and sureness of touch,” and she responds by attempting to show “how his turn to satire was both inevitable and admirable.” See Marvell: The Writer in Public Life (London: Longman, 2000), 72.
fingers,” “hungry guts,” and a “gristly tongue”), but the man is not really the point. The poem’s object is religio-political, not frivolously personal. Flecknoe depended heavily upon English aristocrats for patrons, and, Nigel Smith suggests, he would have recognized Marvell’s utility as a path to Buckingham. The “light-hearted” Flecknoe “avoids the kind of direct denunciation of Catholicism that one might have expected from a militantly Puritan poet,” David Norbrook observes—but it “does offer Villiers a warning about the kinds of company he should avoid keeping.” Marvell’s other satires are even more clearly written with political motives. Annabel Patterson is right to see The Character of Holland (wr. 1653; first complete version published in 1681) as a work written “in a mood of unabashed jingoism,” and as demonstrating “the lowest forms of the kind of insult that is based on stereotypes of national character.” Composed during a period of intense economic and ideological rivalry with Holland, however, this satire is not merely chauvinistic deprecation. Clarendon’s Housewarming (1667), The Loyal Scot (wr. 1667-73; not published until the 1690s), and The Statue in Stocks-Market (wr. 1672-74; pub. 1689) all feature attacks on individuals, but they are not only smear jobs. The criticism of Lauderdale in The Loyal Scot is strategic, as Smith points out, “aimed at minimizing Clarendon’s influence, and that of those who replaced him.” Occasioned by the unveiling of a statue of Charles II, The Statue in Stocks-Market is meant to expose governmental failings. The poem’s final stanza expresses support for Charles, but only for want of more attractive options: the people would “better by far have him than his brother” (l. 60).

73 The quotations are at ll. 41, 43, and 50. Christopher Martin refers to this satire as a work of “scurrilous enmity” and “open ridicule.” See “Flecknoe’s Cabinet and Marvell’s Cankered Muse,” Essays in Criticism 40 (1990): 54-66, at 54 and 63.
75 Patterson, Marvell: The Writer in Public Life, 73-74. Parts of The Character of Holland were published during the Second and Third Dutch Wars as anti-Dutch propaganda (though not by Marvell, who, as Patterson points out, had a much more favorable attitude toward Holland at that time).
76 Like Marvell’s satire, The Downfall of the Chancellor (wr. 1667) attacks Clarendon, but this poet is not making an argument as much as he is voicing contempt after Hyde’s fall: “This shrub of gentry,” the satirist records with spiteful glee, “is tumbl’d down” (ll. 5-6).
77 Poems, ed. Smith, 401.
Marvell’s positives and negatives are usually explicit. His “Painter” poems certainly demean and indict public figures, but that cannot be the last word in characterizing them. The Second Advice (1666; pub. 1667) treats English blunders following the victory over the Dutch in the Battle of Lowestoft; the handling of the affair is presented as evidence of dangerous mismanagement. These poems, Hume rightly observes, “represent a serious negativity well removed from social raillery.” Their heat makes very plain the fact that Marvell sees something worth defending. The Last Instructions to a Painter was composed in 1667, after the Dutch had burned the English fleet at Chatham in the Battle of the Medway. It is an anti-court satire, but we are also shown positive values and figures. And The Last Instructions almost certainly had a practical agenda. Marvell’s intentions were, Patterson suggests, “to shift the blame from the Commons to the Cabal,” to damage Clarendon’s reputation and increase the chance of his impeachment, as well as to exonerate military administrators who were being blamed for the Chatham disaster. The satiric point of The Rehearsal Transpros’d is likewise as much positive as negative. Marvell wants not simply to trash Samuel Parker, but to discredit the anti-tolerationist principles loudly championed by Parker. Marvell’s satires are sober and judgmental but not despairing. However personal he can be, and however caustic some of his denunciations, they make controlled arguments

78 Hume, “‘Satire’ in the Reign of Charles II,” 367. Patterson provides a detailed account of the political message and satirical techniques of Marvell’s “Painter” poems in Marvell: The Writer in Public Life (see chap. 4, “Experiments in satire”).

79 As Smith observes, the poem’s “heroes . . . are those furthest from the court and its ways”; Poems, 364.

80 Patterson, Marvell: The Writer in Public Life, 98. Love also underscores the practical agenda of the “Painter” poems. In his discussion of the target audience for these satires, he concludes, “There can be little doubt that the primary readership envisaged for the painter series was that whose assent was necessary to the crown’s request for supply—Marvell’s (and Waller’s) fellow members of the Cavalier parliament and those who were directly able to influence their votes. The authors of anti-Clarendon satire, addressed to a house effectively controlled by the court and strongly Anglican in its sympathies, would have seen little point in trying to browbeat their readers. Instead they used black comedy to create awareness of disturbing realities and of the consequences that would flow from the continuation of those realities.” These works were meant “to be read for [their] wit by those predisposed against [their] politics” (English Clandestine Satire, 112).

rather than express uninhibited anger. They are often at least imaginably meant to have some potential practical effect, either on impeachment hearings or on parliamentary decisions about religious toleration.

If we compare Marvell with Dryden, another Carolean writer known for satire on affairs of state, we find major disparities stemming from their vastly different political positions. However, Marvell's satire also differs significantly from that of his religio-political ally, Buckingham. He and the duke have the same enemies and are committed to some of the same causes, but they share little in tone and technique. Marvell is verbally clever, especially in a work like The Character of Holland, and sometimes light-hearted, but he is not really a “funny” satirist. His is not Buckingham’s wit, and neither does he mean it to be. Unlike Buckingham and Rochester, Marvell never assumes the role of lampoonist. The duke’s skewering of Arlington in the Aduice to a Paynter is no less politicized than Marvell’s attack on Clarendon, and Buckingham’s motives are political, but the results are gleefully and sometimes gratuitously vindictive in ways Marvell’s personation is not. Neither Marvell nor Buckingham would write or endorse Upon Nothinge, and Rochester would doubtless not commit his satiric energies to The Rehearsal or The Rehearsal Transpro’d. Marvell would not write Buckingham’s Aduice to a Paynter; he might address the same subject, but he would not employ the type of aggression that Buckingham uses. More than any of his well-known contemporaries, Marvell is first and foremost a polemical satirist.

Ayloffe’s anti-monarchical diatribes

John Ayloffe has had few modern readers. The one piece of scholarship devoted solely to his work is a quasi-biographical essay published by Lord in 1966. The critical component of Lord’s article is an argument cautiously but plausibly attributing to Ayloffe a number of satires, including Britannia and Raleigh (wr. 1674-75), once ascribed to Marvell but now accepted as Ayloffe’s. In the ODNB entry for Ayloffe, Warren Chernaike explains that he and Marvell were leading members “in a clandestine organization . . . working in the interests of William of Orange against France.” Ayloffe was also closely

associated with Shaftesbury; was a member of the Green Ribbon Club; and was tried for treason for his participation in the 1683 Rye House Plot, at which point he fled to Holland and continued to plot against the Stuarts. A radical Whig and a classical republican, Ayloffè used satire to execrate Stuart monarchy with exceptional ferocity.

Ayloffè is an angry satirist, heatedly derisory of the Stuarts; he is also pessimistic, longing for a return to republicanism but aware that such a solution is impracticable. Unlike most of Charles’s detractors, Ayloffè definitely envisions an alternative to monarchy. As vehemently as Rochester claims to “hate all Monarchs,” there is nothing to suggest that he really imagined other possibilities. Of the Carolean satirists, Marvell perhaps comes the closest to Ayloffè’s extreme position—in The Last Instructions, he reminds his readers that the royal neck has a joint in it: “And ghastly Charles, turning his collar low, / The purple thread about his neck does show” (ll. 921-22). Yet at the end of The Statue in Stocks-Market (wr. 1672-74), Marvell also ruefully admits that “we’d better by far have [Charles] than his brother.” Never moderate or cautious, Ayloffè scorches the Stuarts. Nostradamus’ Prophecy (wr. 1672), tentatively ascribed by Lord to Ayloffè, is violently anti-monarchical, as is Marvell’s Ghost (wr. 1678). The latter regrets the coronation of James I and the Restoration (“curse the days that first gave birth / To a Cecil or a Monck on earth”) and accuses Charles II and his government of having “laid waste the commonweal,” so that now “villainies infest this isle” that “Would make the son of Claudius smile” (ll. 35-36, 24, 27, 28). Oceana and Britannia (wr. 1681) foretells a return of republicanism and abuses Charles and his circle. The king is a “lewd ravisher,” and “Rapes, burnings, murders are his royal sport; / These modish monsters haunt his perjur’d Court” (ll. 16, 17-18). Discussing his rationale for ascribing this poem to Ayloffè, Lord concludes that, “Here is the histrionic—if not hysterical—tone which appears” in the more certain attributions, and here too is “the attack on the Stuart as a Neronian tyrant (and a bastard) delighting in murder (an allusion to Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey?) and rape, the servile imitator of
Ayloffe’s frenzy sets him apart from Marvell, who, though capable of impassioned critique and invective, is never “hysterical.”

Ayloffe’s *Britannia and Raleigh* is one of many Carolean “vision” satires. The force of the poem is the more obvious if we compare it with another “prophecy,” *An Historical Poem* (wr. 1680), whose author disapprovingly recounts the reign of Charles II from the Restoration to the present. Grousing that “the poor Priapus King” has led the country “to Popery and shame,” the anonymous poet foretells a worse fate for England when James ascends the throne. “If a king’s brother can such mischief bring,” the poet asks, “Then how much greater mischief as a king?” (ll. 64, 58, 181-2). Like Ayloffe, this author indicts Charles in particular and expresses suspicion of the Stuarts more generally, and both writers think that England is in a very bad way. But the satirist of *An Historical Poem* is ultimately only discontented; Ayloffe is desperate. In *Britannia and Raleigh*, he complains about the French influence at English court, where “Pimps, priests, buffoons” are “slimy monsters” who endanger the state by corrupting the king: “I’th sacred ear tyrannic arts they croak, / Pervert his mind, his good intentions choke.” And, finally, “fairy-like the King they steal away, / And in his place a Louis changeling lay” (ll. 26, 27, 29-30, 33-34). Ayloffe is violently apprehensive about the despotic leanings of England’s monarch. Raleigh encourages Britannia to try to save Charles by bringing him back to the English mode of governing, but Charles says that he has no hope of such recovery: “too long in vain I’ve tri’d / The Stuart from the tyrant to divide” (ll. 141-42). The Stuart monarchy is a liability to England, and Ayloffe is disgusted and intensely distressed. The author of *An Historical Poem* is grumbling about a bad situation; Ayloffe is damning Stuart monarchy.

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83 Lord, “Satire and Sedition,” 271. The attribution of this poem to Ayloffe is less definite than that of *Britannia and Raleigh*, though certainly Ayloffe is the most plausible candidate, given the argument and tone of this poem (see also Elias J. Mengel Jr., *POAS-Y*, 2:393).

84 Others include the following: *The Dream of the Cabal* (1672), Ayloffe’s (?) *Nostradamus’ Prophecy* (wr. 1672), *Advice to a Painter to Draw the Duke* by (wr. 1673), *Hodge* (wr. 1679), and *The Waking Vision, or Reality in a Fancy* (1681).

85 The anonymous author of *The Waking Vision* warns Charles against both the “Roman gnat and the Dissenting moth” (l.125). A non-Catholic Tory, the writer no doubt is genuinely resistant to popery and anxious about Whig agitation—but the images of the “gnat” and the “moth” suggest nuisance rather than peril. In tone and
Ayloffe and Marvell were friends and political allies, but Lord is right to contend that the two have patently distinct satiric voices. Marvell’s “treatment of Charles and James is humorous and rueful, but not bitter,” and his satires “are neither anti-Stuart, anti-monarchical, nor republican. They are marked by irony and ridicule, but not by hatred.” Lord is correct, too, to underscore the “uncompromisingly individualistic” nature of Ayloffe’s satire, and to insist that it “be distinguished sharply” from the work of Dryden as well as Marvell, “both moderates in their own ways.” Ayloffe’s satire is tonally different from either of those writers, and so are his purposes. He has “positives,” insofar as he believes wholeheartedly in the virtues of classical republicanism, though he appears to have no positive goal in mind. He complains and probably hopes to strengthen the frustration of the likewise discontented, but he is not attempting to change minds or otherwise to achieve anything constructive. In life Ayloffe is a plotter, conspiring to overthrow the monarchy in favor of republicanism; in satire he is not a would-be political reformer but a bitterly unhappy firebrand.

**Oldham’s Juvenalian performances**

Oldham’s reputation among modern scholars is as the English Juvenal, as the Clevelandesque railer of the post-Restoration years—sharp-tongued, immoderate, and overpowering. He is known primarily for his *Satyrs upon the Jesuits* (1679-81), penned by someone, says Paul Hammond, “who mistook violence for strength, and abuse for wit.” These poems are grimly vehement, but they are also sensational, even purpose, this “vision” poem is manifestly different from *An Historical Poem*, and in another universe altogether from Ayloffe’s satire.

—Lord, “Satire and Sedition,” 268, 273. Marvell’s satire never expresses the same sort of unmitigated contempt that Ayloffe exhibits. The absence of such blatant and immoderate disgust is one reason why scholars confidently deny that Marvell wrote the *Fourth Advice* in the painter series. Love describes the *Fourth Advice* as “a bitter, disillusioned account of the events covered in fuller detail in the ‘Last Instructions.’” Unlike Marvell’s known contributions to the “Painter” series, this “makes no concession to winning over loyalists” (*English Clandestine Satire*, 115).

The speaker of the first is Henry Garnett, Jesuit and superior of the English province at the time of his execution for complicity in the Gunpowder Plot. Reprimanding the Catholics for being too cowardly to kill Charles in order to make James king, Garnett recounts Catholic glories of the past—that is, the various atrocities committed against Protestants—with gruesome vividness. He laments that Bloody Mary’s reign was not bloody enough (ll. 155-56) and revels in the macabre details of the 1572 St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre of the French Huguenots (ll. 203-30). Finally, he enthusiastically envisions an English Catholic uprising: “Spare not in Churches kneeling Priests at pray’r,” he urges his forces, and “Spare not young Infants smiling at the brest.”

Rip teeming Wombs, tear out the hated Brood
From thence, and drown ’em in their Mothers bloud.
Pity not Virgins, nor their tender cries,
Though prostrate at your feet with melting eyes
All drown’d in tears; strike home as ’twere in lust,
And force their begging hands to guide the thrust.
Ravish at th’ Altar, kill when you have done,
Make them your Rapes, and Victims too in one. (ll. 286, 288, 290-97)

The second satire is equally lurid. Garnett cries that he would gladly “stride o’re Crowns, swim through a Flood, / Made up of slaughter’d Monarch’s Brains and Blood” (ll. 177-78). The particulars of past and (Garnett hopes) future bloodbaths are grisly—but does Oldham mean it? Harold F. Brooks suggests that not until the Satyrs upon the Jesuits did Oldham bring real passion to satire. But, as Love says of some of the “quasi-theatrical” anti-Catholic satires of this period, their weakness “lay in an intertextual playfulness that makes it hard to take their ingenious recyclings of libertine fantasies of violent destruction seriously.” Raman Selden describes Oldham’s satires as exercises in “rhetorical exaggeration,”

88 I use the version of Satyrs upon the Jesuits included in The Poems of John Oldham, ed. Brooks. Brooks provides a detailed account of the publication history of these satires, which first appeared separately in pirated editions. He also points out that the original version of these satires were more explicitly political (anti-York) than they were in the first authorized edition (1681). See especially pp. xxx-xxxiv.
89 Poems, ed. Brooks, xxix; Love, English Clandestine Satire, 126. Love is dealing in particular with the satires directed at the Lord Chief Justice, Sir William Scroggs, though he also refers to Oldham’s dramatic attack on the Jesuits. James Zigerell also highlights Oldham’s use of “hyperbole,” the satires’ “larger-than-life” feel, and their melodrama. Parts of the satire consist of “unbridled rant,” a tendency “typical of Oldham”: “Too often [the satire] is blown completely out of all proportion.” See John Oldham (Boston: Twayne, 1983), 74, 78, 81.
expressed by “a dramatically-distanced and unreliable persona.”90 Oldham’s anti-Catholicism is certainly sincere, but how much of the indignation he voices is genuine and how much is a performance is impossible to say. Given the rest of his satiric output, I am inclined to believe that there is at least an element of hyperbole at work in the thunderous Jesuit poems.

Oldham’s other satires do not suggest much real conviction. *The Careless Good Fellow* (1680) addresses the Popish Plot, but its author is neither outraged nor particularly concerned. The poem was written when Tories were starting “to shrug off the Terror [of the Popish Plot] as a ploy of the Whigs,” as Brooks points out, and “Oldham changed with the nation,” treating the horrid plot “with a humorous detachment of which no Shaftesbury Whig would have been capable.”91 The speaker of the poem casually laments that the silly plot has created such a fuss, and he claims to be indifferent to England’s political crisis (“I mind not grave asses who idly debate / About right and succession, the trifles of state”) and to Louis, “The Bully of France” (ll. 19-20, 31). He is worried only about good claret. Oldham was no less anti-Catholic in 1680 than he had been a year earlier, but this satire expresses none of the venom of the *Satyrs upon the Jesuits*. Neither is it an exemplar of the Juvenalian rage with which he is so often associated. His “curse” satires—*Upon a Woman*, *Upon a Bookseller*, and *Upon the Author of the Play call’d Sodom*—are wrathful, but only superficially so. They seem to be turbulent performances of righteous anger rather more than expressions of real fury. Brooks explains *Sardanapalus*, *A Dithyrambique on Drinking*, and other poems as “vers d’occasion” composed without passion.92

*Sardanapalus*, like Rochester’s “scepter lampoon,” depicts a libidinous and irresponsible monarch whose promiscuity is a liability to the country he rules—and a brief comparison between the two satires illustrates something fundamental about both. Griffin rejects the political reading of *Sardanapalus*, explaining the poem as “little more than gross obscenity and a choreographed orgiastic

92 Poems, ed. Brooks, xxix. *Sardanapalus* and *A Dithyrambique* were apparently written for Rochester and his circle, who had expressed appreciation of the *Satyr Against Vertue*. 


extravaganza." Whatever political implications he meant the poem to have, Oldham does conspicuously use images of statecraft along with those of sexual incontinence: with “Love’s great Scepter in thy hand,” the monarch never does “withhold thy Liberality, / Nor ever drain the vast Exchequer of thy Lechery”; the king’s enemies in vain tried “T’abridge thy Soveraign Pr—k’s Prerogative” (ll. 37, 69-70, 93). Even if Oldham’s poem was meant as an attack on Charles II, it has neither the directness nor the visceral disgust of Rochester’s invective. Brooks is right to insist that “no poem of Oldham’s is like a poem of Rochester’s.”

Oldham’s bawdy 182-line romp is clear enough in its presentation of the monarch’s misdeeds, and the irony of his “Ode” to the profligate “Great Prince” is manifest (l. 1). But his discursive blame-by-praise of an ancient Assyrian king—divided into formal stanzas and delivered in past tense—is a universe apart from the earl’s apparently impromptu tirade, a short, forceful, direct attack on this king, the monarch of this country (as the opening lines make plain). Both works ultimately point to the sovereign’s lasciviousness as a political problem, and in both the king is indicted—but in tone, intensity, clarity of aim, and apparent object, they represent very different satiric enterprises.

Oldham’s rendition of social (as of political) evils is usually distinctly unimpassioned. In *A Satyr Against Vertue* (wr. 1676?; pub. 1679), he ironically decries goodness, maintaining that virtue can only thrive where there are no people (being “Too difficult for Flesh and Blood”). Morality is “unfashionable”; conscience is a “giddy airy Dream”; and only “dull unbred Fools” would “discredit Vice” (ll. 54, 100, 143, 161). Otway makes a useful contrast. On the surface, Oldham says what Otway says in his darker social satires like *Friendship in Fashion*—people behave badly and not much can be done about it. Otway surveys a bleak state of affairs and is revolted; Oldham’s attitude is more difficult

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93 Griffin, “Dryden and Restoration Satire,” 189. Hammond had argued that *Sardanapalus* was likely “a satirical allusion to Charles II,” and that “Oldham may have been attempting to emulate Rochester’s ‘sceptre’ lampoon” (*John Oldham and the Remains of Classical Culture*, 33).

to determine Griffin usefully suggests that “imitation” is a crucial part of Oldham’s satire, in which he “typically speaks not in his ‘own’ voice, but sets out to ‘imitate’ or to ‘impersonate’ a Juvenalian declamer, a Jesuit conspirator, a Rochesterian rake.” A satirist who mimics Rochesterian satire is not the same kind of satirist as Rochester, just as feigning moral outrage is not the same as expressing real ire. Oldham the satirist is ultimately a dynamic—and sometimes dazzling—performer.

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Unlike Marvell, Buckingham, and Dryden, Oldham is not an overtly political satirist. He clearly prefers Protestantism to Catholicism and is a good English patriot on that score, but his satires do not reflect a strongly positive agenda. Neither do they express the vitriol and negativity of Marvell and Ayloffe. Marvell is the most restrained of this trio, but his tonal moderation hardly signals absence of conviction—and Oldham’s blustery satirical curses do not necessarily indicate deeply felt hostility. Marvell the satirist makes arguments in the hopes of influencing the present course of action. Ayloffe articulates his hatred of a king and government that has failed him and England, but he does so without practical positive objectives. Oldham’s Satyrs upon the Jesuits are at least superficially impassioned, and in the late 1670s probably manifesting real anxiety, but his other satires seem largely fireworks, full of sound and fury but signifying very little.

IV. The case of Hudibras

I have been dealing with contrasts found in individual satirists and their works. I want now to look at a particular case, one that presents us with a fundamentally different concept of how satire might function.

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95 Selden suggests that “Oldham’s indignation is often playful: he wears his pen like a sword and runs through ‘each affronting Sot’” (“Oldham, Pope, and Restoration Satire,” 125).
96 Griffin, “Dryden and Restoration Satire,” 191. Selden argues for Rochester’s influence on Oldham in “Rochester and Oldham: ‘High Rants in Profaness’,” The Seventeenth Century 6 (1991): 89-103. He finally concedes that “Rochester’s ‘all-teaching tongue’ cannot be given all the credit for Oldham’s stylistic exuberance,” and that “Oldham’s own brand of heroic satire is not Rochester’s” (102-03)—but his emphasis on their similarities is nonetheless misleading.
Samuel Butler’s *Hudibras* (1662-77) was one of the most popular satires of the Carolean period,\(^{97}\) was frequently reprinted throughout the eighteenth century, and—if the number of poems written in hudibrastics is anything to go by—a widely-known and influential text. The customary reading of Butler’s poem explains it as a relatively straightforward attack on the king’s enemies in the English civil wars. The explicit ridicule of Puritan folly has been taken as the satire’s sole political agenda, and scholars generally assume that *Hudibras* can be tidily categorized as a “mega-lampoon pinned up over the defeated Puritans.”\(^{98}\) Echoing the scholarly consensus, Griffin flatly asserts that, “Butler in the 1660s writes \textit{against} the defeated and discredited Puritan party. Of that much there is no dispute. But critics of Butler have found it very difficult to define what it is that Butler is \textit{for}.”\(^{99}\) As I have argued elsewhere, however, Butler is writing for a cause in *Hudibras*, not just against an easy target.\(^{100}\)

Why would Butler expend such time and energy debunking a defeated enemy? *Hudibras* is generally read as a triumphant condemnation of the radicals, but its author never celebrates the king’s return. The poem was apparently composed after the Restoration, but the narrative is not one of Royalist power and order. Hudibras is not captured and tamed at the poem’s end; indeed, by the end of Part III, his trouble-making is matched by the rioting of the rabble. What does Butler expect his account to illustrate? The issues that precipitated the civil war did not disappear upon the reinstallation of Stuart monarchy, and Butler’s seemingly retrospective satire should be read with that in mind. In Parts I and II, he writes a blistering denunciation of Presbyterians and Independents. What are the contexts and implications, in the early 1660s, of such a satire?

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\(^{97}\) Part I of *Hudibras* was available by the end of 1662 (Pepys bought a copy on 26 December); Part II was available in late 1663 (Pepys borrowed a copy on 28 November). As John Wilders points out in his Introduction to *Hudibras* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), the third part’s title page lists 1678, but the first edition was available in print by 6 November 1677 (lvi). \textit{The Term Catalogues} give a 1674 price (for parts I and II) of 3\textls 6\textld; four years later, parts I and II are listed at 4\textls. *Hudibras* is advertised throughout the eighteenth century in various formats and at various prices: in 1709 (3\textls in 1 vol. or 4\textls in 3 vols.); in 1710 (3\textls 6\textld); in 1714 (6\textls); in 1729 (by subscription for the dumbfounding sum of a guinea); in 1744 (12\textls unbound); in 1750 (2\textls 6\textld); in 1762 (3\textls 6\textld); in 1764 (12\textls); in 1772 (3\textls 6\textld). Hogarth’s *Hudibras* engravings sold by themselves for 15\textls in 1726.


\(^{99}\) Griffin, \textit{Satire}, 150.

In 1660 moderate Presbyterians had been considered acceptable, at least by some Anglicans. The Act of Uniformity in 1662 did less to exclude them because they were nonconformists than it did to redefine them as such. The exclusion of Presbyterians from the Church of England in part required and in part resulted in their being linked with more radical Independents as a homogeneous sectarian threat. Butler’s poem explicitly reinforces this gesture of consolidation, as he unites Presbyterian Knight and Independent Squire as a rabble-rousing, trouble-making, peace-disturbing duo. This union is not merely a casual attempt at a blanket dismissal of nonconformity, or at least it would not have been read as such in the early 1660s. Presbyterians had opposed the regicide, supported the Restoration, and pressed for a moderate church, and to lump them with extreme separatists would have had obvious connotations for readers with any knowledge of English politics in the immediate aftermath of Charles’s return. Butler’s poem appears to support the move made by Anglican royalists to redefine Presbyterianism as nonconformist, as beyond the pale. He is on the side of those opposed to toleration, and the first two parts of Hudibras take part in the public debate about what the official policy toward dissent should be. In these early sections, Butler argues for the practicality of a hard-line approach, for the denial of liberty of conscience and the rigorous enforcement of uniformity.

Parts I and II of Hudibras expose the perfidy of the dissenters. Early in the poem, the Knight and Squire skirmish with a group of bear-baiters, who eventually withdraw to regroup. The party’s female combatant, Trulla, returns and trounces Hudibras and Ralpho, and the first part ends with the blundering anti-heroes appropriately imprisoned in “th’enchanted castle” (the stocks). The two protagonists, representing the Presbyterians and Independents specifically and the dissenters more generally, are doubtless the most conspicuous targets of the satire in this first part. Hudibras is especially ridiculous, fancying himself a glorious hero but finding himself urine-soaked (after giving way to terror during a tussle) and then defeated by a woman. The title page identifies this poem as “The First Part,” implying that Butler expected to produce a sequel. Although the incendiaries are duly detained at the end of Part I, the impending second part promises the continuation of Hudibras’s troublemaking. A widow visits the pair in the prison at the start of Part II, and bails them out on the condition that Hudibras whip himself
and reform. With Ralpho’s help, the Knight talks himself out of self-flagellation, and proceeds to the Widow’s house to court her, and to swear that he has kept his word.

Butler’s fanatics are laughingstocks as well as cheats, but *Hudibras* is not a gratuitous thumping of defeated radicals. It is instead a timely warning about Carolean governmental policies. Hudibras and Ralpho are not the satire’s only dupes: the Knight successfully gulls almost everyone in the world of the poem, and though he does not always win, he is never stopped. The ungainly Presbyterian Knight is never coerced into more suitable behavior, but instead makes fools out of his captors and contrives to be unjustifiably released from jail. The central message of *Hudibras* is that, impassioned oath-taking notwithstanding, the canting nonconformists are not to be trusted. *Hudibras* is a polemical contribution to a contemporary debate about how dissenters of all stripes should be treated in the years following the Restoration, and Butler belongs to the group of uncompromising royalists who sought to squelch Charles’s tolerationist leanings.

Butler returned to the narrative of *Hudibras* in 1677 (when Part III was published), but the third part is noticeably different from, and more complex than, the first two. Part III is a commentary on a constitutional crisis, and one of its villains is—anticipating Dryden’s later satire—the treacherous “Achitophel.” From Butler’s point of view, Shaftesbury represents a twofold menace: he seeks to undermine royal prerogative while serving as “patron of the dissenters,”101 and he has manipulated a large body of supporters by sensationalizing the Catholic threat. From a Tory perspective, the Whigs’ cry of counter-reformation is overblown—merely scandalmongers’ hearsay offered up to a gullible populace whose manic responses endanger civil order. Butler would agree with Dryden’s characterization of Achitophel as the proponent of “Weak Arguments! which yet he knew ful well, / Were strong with People easie to Rebell” (ll. 214-15). Like a number of Tory writers in the late 1670s, Butler attempts to associate Shaftesburyian Whigs with the radicals of the 1640s. His revival of the old plot is shrewd, but neither surprising nor exceptional: he was not the only Tory who worried that the ’41 had come again. The

message in Part III is not unlike the message of its predecessors: to be lenient toward the dissenters is to court disaster. The link among the three parts of Hudibras, and the real target of Butler’s satire, is not just nonconformist folly but hazardous changes in the operation of English government.

In the 1660s, Butler called into question the clemency granted to those who had attempted to topple monarchy and warned against granting formal toleration to the duplicitous dissenters. In the 1670s, he attacks the popular control of government and the diminishing inviolability of monarchical authority, targeting Shaftesbury as the voice of the opposition. In Parts I and II, Butler was critical of nonconformist folly and suspicious of Charles’s policies; in Part III, he is equally scornful of dissent and toleration, but such a position requires him to defend the administration against its opposition. Butler seems to have had very little interest either in celebrating or in maligning the character of any particular monarch, but he is defending monarchy—which is, in his view, the most effective and most practical form of government, so long as it is unmoved by popular influence. The alternative is the world of Hudibras—a world of madness and mayhem, in which charlatans and knaves are unrestrained and authority is unasserted.

Butler, no less than Dryden, wants monarchy and patriarchal authority to work. He does not share Dryden’s nostalgia or desire for mystical politics: he is interested not in divine right but in the exercise of sovereign control over the state. In Absalom and Achitophel, Dryden’s primary positive agenda is succinctly delivered in a question: “What Prudent men a setled Throne woud shake?” (l. 796). However willing Dryden is to denounce Shaftesbury and Monmouth, and Butler to defame the radicals, neither Absalom and Achitophel nor Hudibras can be adequately explained in terms of those attacks.102 They are written in defense of monarchy by satirists intensely apprehensive about the (internal and external) threats to that ruling structure.103 Although Butler is sometimes associated with Rochester—

102 Durfey’s Butler’s Ghost: or, Hudibras. The Fourth Part (1682) is a slashing denunciation of the Whigs in general and of Shaftesbury in particular. This satire, like Hudibras, is written with at least an implicit positive agenda.

103 The Geneva Ballad (1674), sometimes attributed to Butler, is a similar satire. Its author scorches the nonconformists, but he also recalls the regicide (“When monarchy began to bleed / And treason had a fine new
both are “low” and coarse\textsuperscript{104}—in satiric terms he has more in common with Dryden. He and Dryden both use their satire to revile what they find repulsive, as does Rochester, but they also write in defense of something they see threatened and want to preserve. Butler’s return to the narrative of the civil war should not prevent us from reading his poem as a Carolean satire in the most literal sense: \textit{Hudibras} represents the civil war period, but largely as a way of commenting on the radically changing political climate of the 1660s and 1670s. Superficial and one-sided readings of \textit{Hudibras} have held sway right to the present day, but Butler was in fact writing a far more immediately topical and political satire than he has ever been given credit for. \textit{Hudibras} is certainly anti-dissent, and Butler is unquestionably pro-royalist, but his coldly realistic assessment of Carolean politics gives the tripartite poem implications, complexities, and resonances that critics have almost entirely failed to recognize.

\textit{Hudibras} has been read as the foremost example of what Love calls “a predictable early [Restoration] vogue for anti-Puritan satire.”\textsuperscript{105} But like Butler, a number of other apparent participants in this fad have other motives—many of the works that conspicuously trash nonconformists have contemporary applications. In \textit{The Presbyterian Lash. or, Noctroff’s Maid Whipt} (an anonymous closet comedy printed in 1661), the central character and most obvious satiric butt is the Presbyterian Priest Noctroffe, whose duplicity causes chaos and ruins the reputation of more honorable characters. In Noctroffe’s triumphant closing address, however, he explains how much his success owes to a gullible society. His Independent and Cavalier counterparts do not see that he has “contrived every minutes circumstance,” and because of their laxity he is left in a dangerously powerful position (30). Even as the Presbyterians are exposed as treacherous, the Cavaliers are revealed as naïve and negligent. We should


\textsuperscript{105} Love, \textit{English Clandestine Satire}, 19.
also remember that this is not an attack on the radicals: in 1660-61, the Presbyterians were mostly royalists seeking to dissociate themselves from more radical dissenters and hoping to be incorporated into an established church.

Satires on the late and unlamented Puritan regime frequently have more practical relevance than their most obvious targets might suggest. Sir Robert Howard’s *The Committee* (November 1662) explicitly satirizes the Commonwealth government, but it also implies problems with the new administration. In the final scenes, the Parliamentarian committee-men realize that they must “cozen those that cozen all the World,” and pledge allegiance to the group now in power. One character advises another, “If you will have good luck in every thing, Turn Cavalier, and cry, God bless the King.” The play’s Puritans are knaves, but the monarch looks foolish for seeking the help of his enemies and accepting their cheaply purchased loyalty as sincere.\(^{106}\) Abraham Cowley was accused of attacking the Cavalier party in his *Cutter of Coleman-Street* (December 1661; pub. 1663), a charge he denied in the preface to the 1663 printed version. Nevertheless, contemporary audiences were probably right to sense that the play does more than lampoon the radicals: the themes of pretended loyalty and political opportunism had broader application. Cutter and Worm are cunning rebels disguised as Cavalier officers, so that professed loyalism becomes dubious. When the two impostors reunite after a quarrel, they shake hands and agree to forget, all the while crooning songs in celebration of King Charles’s happy return. Charles’s champions in this case are not his own men but dissenting charlatans, and their superficial reconciliation is linked directly to the formal Stuart reinstatement. The Restoration, as Cowley presents it, seems both unsatisfactory and unstable.

The Puritans were safe targets and convenient camouflage for riskier criticisms in the 1660s, and illustrating their menace made for a nice warning, still painfully relevant after Charles’s return. John Wilson’s *The Cheats* (1663), a coarse city comedy satirizing the Puritans, also points to widespread deception: as the astrologer-physician Mopus observes in the play, “there are but 2 Sorts of people in the

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\(^{106}\) *The Committee* was first published in Howard’s *Four New Plays* (1665), with *The Surprisal, The Indian-Queen, and The Vestal-Virgin*. The quotations are at pp. 133, 134.
world—Aut qui Captant aut qui Captantur.”

Derek Hughes explains that Wilson’s play concludes “with the fanatic cynically surviving and prospering within the restored order.” As in Hudibras, the implicit message is that no one’s words are to be trusted—and those of disloyal dissidents least of all. Hughes calls John Lacy’s The Old Troop (1664; pub. 1672) yet “more irreverent” than The Cheats.

Lacy’s satire is directed primarily at the roundheads, but

we are also shown the milder, but still considerable, flaws of the plundering Cavaliers, and throughout the play Lacy reiterates and discredits the moral and social vocabulary associated with idealizing representations of restoration: trust, honour, honesty, truth, troth, faith, service, and friendship. . . . Not surprisingly, this play does not promise restoration of Astraea-like absolutes of order.

When the Cavalier Tell-Troth is asked if he will fight for the king out of “stark love and kindness,” he responds with telling candor: “No; I’ll fight for him as all men fight for Kings, partly for love, partly for my own ends. I’ll fight bravely for a Battel or two; then beg an old house to make a Garrison of, grow rich, consequently a coward, and then let the Dog bite the Bear, or the Bear the Dog” (7). The Old Troop is more explicitly impertinent in its treatment of the restored monarchy and its supporters than are the other pieces with which I have been dealing—but none of these satires should be airily dismissed as a retrospective thumping of defeated enemies.

Because scholars define satire principally in terms of writer and target, there is a marked tendency to believe that once an obvious satiric object has been identified, the work has been deciphered. Hudibras serves as a salutary warning against that way of reading satires. Buckingham is almost certainly smudging his satiric targets in The Rehearsal. Bayes is manifestly a parody of Dryden, and Buckingham’s disapproval is genuine. But Bayes is a composite figure, simultaneously representing both Dryden and Arlington—just as Marvell’s ridicule of “Bayes” in his Rehearsal Transpos’d is, as Derek

109 Hughes, English Drama 1660-1700, 56-57. As Richard W. Bevis says, Lacy is “refreshingly frank about the Royalists’ failings” (English Drama, 75).
Hirst explains, at once an attack on Samuel Parker, Dryden, and Davenant. Camouflaged attack is a possibility and—in a world where Stephen College is executed for a seditious libel and Dryden clubbed for saying unpleasant things about powerful people—even a necessity.

Butler and Buckingham in particular appear to be consciously, and prudently, obscuring their targets. In *Absalom and Achitophel* Dryden creates distance via allegory, but allegorical displacement is not genuine camouflage with one target concealed (or quasi-concealed) under another. Butler and Buckingham present ostensibly real objects of ridicule, whereas—unless one could believe that Dryden was actually just retelling a biblical episode—*Absalom and Achitophel* does not. The presence of obvious contemporary targets in Butler’s and Buckingham’s satires is “safe” from the sort of decoding that Dryden invites the reader to carry out in his allegory. While both Butler and Buckingham give the reader/viewer some signals (e.g., the use of Quixote in *Hudibras* and the nose patch in *The Rehearsal*), their use of concealment also makes “proving” the camouflaged attacks impossible. This is a special kind of satire, one far removed from straightforward invective, parallel, and allegory. The lesson of *Hudibras* and *The Rehearsal*—two of the most popular satires of the Carolean period—is that the most conspicuous butt is not always the only or even the most significant target.

V. Personal and social satire: from lampoons to Otway and Lee

Satiric “attack” can take a variety of forms, and we need to make distinctions in tone and intensity, among other things. In the realm of personal and generalized social satire, we might usefully ask questions about the nature of the attack, insofar as that can be guessed at. For example: Is the satirist really worried


111 Love recounts several instances of retaliation (of various types) directed at authors of lampoons (English Clandestine Satire, 151-54). In Hume’s discussion of John Crowne’s *City Politiques*, he points out that the play was “unquestionably designed to mock Whig aims and politics in 1681-82. But to what degree its characters are intended to be identified as particular individuals is not so clear. In his pious and probably disingenuous note ‘To the Reader’ in the 1683 quarto, Crowne admits satirizing Titus Oates as Doctor Sanchy but protests innocence beyond that.” But, Hume continues, “The play invites applications, and right or wrong, they could produce reprisals.” Crowne was beaten, probably by friends of the late Rochester. Hume quotes Crowne’s lamentation, in the introductory note to *City Politiques*, that “Libels may prove costly things” (“‘Satire’ in the Reign of Charles II,” 357-58).
and/or angry? Is there authorial commitment, or is the satire just for show? How seriously does the writer take the offender/offense, or how serious is the perceived threat? We ought to consider, most broadly, how much the writer cares and whether judgment is being rendered. Idle abuse is different in kind from principled criticism. Drubbing easy targets for the sake of pleasing an audience is one thing; expressing genuine disapproval of someone or of a situation is quite another. Likewise, walloping a personal rival merely to vent frustration is not the same enterprise, in satiric terms, as attempting to malign someone in defense of a position or set of principles to which the author is deeply committed.

Not all attacks on individuals seem personally motivated.\footnote{Satire (1680)—an imitation of Juvenal’s first satire—is a brief but sweeping list of offending individuals and types, and its point seems to be detached grousing rather than engaged attack. In this poem as in Utile Dulce (1681), no single target seems especially significant or even relevant; both poets are complaining for the sake of complaining. Satyr Unmuzzled (wr. 1680) ridicules Shaftesbury and Monmouth, but “the satire is more moral than political,” and the inclusiveness of the attack suggests that this is more an expression of general unhappiness than particularized enmity (Mengel, \textit{POAS-Y}, 2:209).} Shadwell’s stinging funny satirical depiction of Sir Robert Howard as Sir Positive At-all in \textit{The Sullen Lovers} (1668) evidently does not reflect real authorial animosity. “We are not to suppose,” says Montague Summers, “that Shadwell had any particular grievance against, far less that he had any personal quarrel with, the great Sir Robert Howard,” who was “conspicuous as a butt for irresistible satire.”\footnote{The Complete Works of Thomas Shadwell, ed. Summers, 5 vols. (London: The Fortune Press, 1927), 1:xli.} Shadwell’s goal was apparently “to amuse an audience prepared to revel in mockery of a pompous and pretentious playwright and man of affairs,”\footnote{Hume, ‘“Satire’ in the Reign of Charles II,” 353. Pepys hated \textit{The Sullen Lovers} upon his first two viewings (see 2 and 4 May 1668), but after being informed that, “By Sir Positive At-all . . . is meant Sir Rob. Howard” (5 May), he changed his tune, enjoying the abuse of Howard and observing that Shadwell’s representation “is most exactly true” (8 May). See \textit{The Diary of Samuel Pepys}, ed. William Matthews and Robert Latham, 11 vols. (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1970-83), vol. 9. Quotations at pp. 186, 191.} and he seems to be enjoying himself in that effort. Some of the lampoons on court ladies are gleefully disparaging, but they too are essentially exercises in thrashing oft-thrashed targets. \textit{On the Ladies of the Court} (wr. c. 1663) moves briskly from victim to victim, providing bawdy snapshots of each woman’s sexual adventures and misadventures in turn. The pictures are not flattering, but the poem is a pageant of insults rather than a high-heat denunciation. Charles, Viscount Mordaunt’s \textit{The Ladies’ March} (1681) is another spectacle of contumelies, a zippy sequence of quasi-epigrammatic derogations.

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Mordaunt describes a procession of twenty-three Court ladies (in fewer than 100 lines), and he does so, in Love’s phrasing, with “kinaesthetic force.” The sketches are deprecatory but in very standard ways. The Ballad on Betty Felton (wr. 1680), unusual in aiming at only a single and rather insignificant court lady, is likewise jauntily insulting. Felton is an easy target, not a significant threat or problem; the author is enjoying saying dirty things, not making a moral, social, or political argument. Other satires that attack court ladies and/or Charles’s mistresses without real malevolence include Lampoon (wr. 1676), a vulgar attack on the Countess of Castlemaine; the bawdy, fast-paced, lightweight On Several Women about Town (wr. 1680); An Ironical Satire (wr. 1680); and The Lady Freschvile’s Song of the Wives (wr. 1682). Much of this sort of personal rubbishing goes on in Carolean satirical writing, and, as Hume’s study makes clear, we have to acknowledge how much of this dirt-flinging occurs if we are to get a full sense of the period. But we need also to recognize the possibility of sharply negative satire written with intentions to do good. Satire whose object is to degrade personally—for pleasure or for the sake of abuse—is different in kind from satire that demeans personally in defense of something the author believes in.

Satires on the court ladies are not always purely frivolous, written sans genuine authorial conviction or concern. Compare the lampoon on Betty Felton to An Essay of Scandal (wr. 1681), a satire on various court ladies. Nell Gwyn is described as a “hare-brained, wrinked, stopped-up whore, / Daily struck, stabbed, by half the pricks in town” (ll. 43-44), and the denigration bears some resemblance to that of Felton—but the satires are drastically different in tone and purpose. The deriding of the women in An Essay of Scandal is not the point: the satirist is entreating Charles to replace these costly harlots with cheaper and less treacherous courtesans. As Love rightly insists, “We have to read past this sexual

\footnote{116}{Wilson, Court Satires, 47.}
\footnote{117}{The Lady Freschvile’s Song of the Wives targets a number of court ladies whose names, Wilson observes, “had become almost obligatory in satires” (Court Satires, 112).}
narrative for its political core.”

The subject is not a particular mistress or set of mistresses but the insolvency of king and state. The image of Nell in *A Panegyric* (wr. 1681) is similar in combining personal scorn with an expression of political anxiety: the “imperial whore” finds herself “dangling scepters in her dirty hand” (ll. 15, 21).

This is both mean and funny, but although this satire focuses more on Nell than on the state of the country, the political implications of the monarch’s promiscuity prevent it from being only amusing. The author of *The Royal Buss* (wr. 1675) is worried not about the king’s sexual antics, *per se*, but about the ways in which wantonness affects his prerogative. “Carwell” is a bad influence, and Charles rules—as he lives—with wild abandon: “red hot with whine and whore, / He kick’d the Parliament out of door” (ll. 69-70). Certainly some satires on the court ladies and on the sovereign’s incontinence are frivolously nasty, but these are different in kind from equally withering personal attacks written with more than purely spiteful motives. The animosity toward the king’s mistresses treats them not only as strumpets but also as tempting distractions and power-mongers—and Charles, whores’ cully and merry monarch, is a political liability.

A remarkably high number of Carolean satires are personally vicious for political reasons. Not much could be done about the easy king and his many women, but conspicuous governmental figures could often be derided to some practical effect. Buckingham’s vilifications of Arlington and Danby, and Marvell’s of Clarendon, are purposive attempts to blacken the personal reputations of public men.

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119 Similar satires include the bawdy, 8-line lampoon called *Nell Gwynne* (wr. 1669); *The Queen’s Ball* (wr. 1670), a 40-line attack on Queen Catherine; and Dorset’s *Colin* (wr. 1679; also called *Colon*), a politicized invective directed at the Duchess of Portsmouth. See also the *Satire on the Court Ladies* (wr. 1680), whose author (says Wilson) was a misogynist as well as being “viciously anti-York and anti-Catholic,” and probably “a member of the ‘Country’ Party (soon to be known as Whigs), and a bigoted Protestant” (*Court Satires*, 36).

120 The author of *Acrostick* grumbles that the besotted Charles risks his throne, and encourages the king to “Suffer not these base mercenary Whores / To rob thy kingdom & to drain thy Stores.” He also warns Charles: “Employ ye Selfe like neighboring Kings in armes / Secure the Nation & ye Selfe from harms.” The manuscript is dated 1679-81 (which seems plausible), but this poem is not dated. In the same collection is *The Dissolution 1679* (fols. 48-49), whose author issues a similar warning. A king who “draws his Reasons from his breeches” endangers the country (“Good Lord deliver this poore Realm”) and himself: “Beware unthinking Charles beware / Consider & begin to feare.” The satirist’s anxiety is marked; this seems to reflect genuine distress (as it would, in 1679).

121 Other instances of this sort of purposive detraction include *A Dialogue between Duke Lauderdale and the Lord Danby* (1679); *On Mrs. Cellier in the Pillory* (1680); *On Plotters* (wr. 1680); *A Panegyric on the Author of*
are the attacks on Clarendon ("Old fatguts"), Arlington, Clifford, and Castlemaine (the “prerogative quean”) in *A Ballad* (wr. 1667)—not idle expressions of malice, but instead biting articulations of practical frustration with the current state of affairs in England (ll. 13, 44). Likewise, the author of *Upon his Majesty’s being made Free of the City* (wr. 1674) decries both Charles’s personal lasciviousness and his political failings, related manifestations of his unrestraint. The poet judges the king’s misconduct very harshly—as does Rochester in his “scepter lampoon,” a far more venomous satire than *Upon his Majesty’s being made Free of the City*, penned by a man much closer to the king and more intensely disgusted than the anonymous satirist appears to be.  

The ten-line squib *A Character of the Church of Chichester* (wr. 1673) targets the Bishop of Chichester for his tolerance of non-Anglicans. *Strange’s Case, Strangly [sic] Altered* (1680) censures Roger L’Estrange as a Yorkist and as an enemy to Protestantism; other, similarly motivated attacks on L’Estrange include the scurrilous *Crack upon Crack: or Crack-Fart Whipt with his own Rod* (1680) and Shadwell’s (?) *The Protestant Satire* (wr. 1684), which pillories both L’Estrange and Dryden. The author of *The Cabal* (1680) hotly accuses the Green Ribbon Club members of sedition (as does *The Essex Ballad* [1d*] of the same year), and his satiric portraits of Buckingham, Monmouth, Shaftesbury, and Halifax give vent to solemn hostility. *The D: of B: Letany* (1679) includes a good bit of plain meanness, but the satirist is clearly worrying about Buckingham’s power and influence: "From beginning an Execrable Traitors health / To destroy this Parliment, King, and himself, / To be made Dukeall, -Peere of a new common Wealth. / Libera nos etc.” (ll. 65-68).  

Similar in being primarily political rather than personal

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Absalom and Achitophel (1681); Shadwell’s *The Medal of John Bayes* (1682); and Settle’s *Absalom Senior* (1682). See also Shadwell’s *The Tory-Poets: A Satyr* (1682; 3d*), a brutally clear attack on the Tories in general and on Dryden in particular: “So engine Bays, the Tory-Plot to save / He first turns Fool, and then commences Knave” (p.3). No doubt Shadwell’s animus is intensified by personal hostility toward the poet of *Mac Flecknoe*, but this is a religio-political piece.

122 John Lacy’s *Satire* (1677) is similar in kind to *Upon his Majesty’s being made Free of the City*. It is more detailed than either that poem or the “scepter” lampoon, and while it is biting and disgusted, it does not have the same degree of venom that Rochester’s attack has.

123 I cite the version printed by Hume and Love (*Plays, Poems, and Miscellaneous Writings associated with . . . Buckingham*, 2: Appendix II). They also print *A New Ballad to an Old Tune Call’d Sage Leaf* (wr. 1673?), another vehement smear job written against Buckingham with evident political purpose (see the headnotes to the *New Ballad* and the *Letany* in Explanatory Notes, 498 and 500 respectively). Among the most incisive satires on
are a number of attacks on Monmouth and on Shaftesbury—those these works vary in length, format, technique, tone, and level and type of aggression.124

What divides these satires from Shadwell’s caricature of Howard or the anonymous lampoon on Betty Felton is essentially their level of intensity, a feature by which we can also differentiate generalized social satires. Some such satire expresses little real hostility on the writer’s part. Ridiculing standard butts and bantering generalized targets is amusing, and often very popular—but the level of authorial commitment tends to be rather low. In The London Cuckolds (1681; pub. 1683), Edward Ravenscroft portrays the cuckolding of three imprudent cits, each of whom has married a woman he thinks will not or cannot cuckold him (i.e., one takes a witty, one a foolish, and one a godly wife). The play is a romp, Ravenscroft seems untroubled by the scenes he is describing, and nothing is at stake. Neither infidelity nor unsatisfying matrimony is at issue here; the intrigues are comical, and we are meant to laugh at them without judgment. The cits were evidently not offended: The London Cuckolds was staged annually on the Lord Mayor’s Day until 1751, largely for their entertainment.125 Although The Country-Wife (1675) and The Man of Mode (1676) are formulaic and do not present a coherent moral program, there is a fair amount of rueful irony underlying the contemplation of libertinism in Etherege’s satire.126 The contrast

Buckingham is the character sketch penned by Butler, his sometime secretary. No man is a hero to his secretary, and “A Duke of Bucks” is a lacerating account of the shortcomings of “one that has studied the whole Body of Vice.” Butler’s other character sketches are all on types (“A Politician,” “An Undeserving Favourite,” “The Affected or Formal”—his treatment of the highly individual “Duke of Bucks” as a recognizable breed makes the satire even more stinging. Charles W. Daves collects all 285 of Butler’s known sketches in his edition of Characters (Cleveland: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1970). “A Duke of Bucks” is at pp. 66-67, quotation at 66.

124 Satires on Monmouth are myriad, but a few examples include A Ballad Called Perkin’s Figary (wr. 1679), A Dialogue between Nathan and Absalom (wr. 1680), The Club of Royalists (1681), and The Great Despair of the London Whigs (wr. 1683; pub. 1685). Shaftesbury is also much-satirized, as in Nevil Payne’s The Siege of Constantinople (1674; pub. 1675), John Caryll’s The Hypocrite (1678), the Nicky-Nacky scenes in Orway’s Venice Preserv’d (1682), Behn’s The City-Heiress (1682), and The Last Will and Testament of Anthony King of Poland (1682).

125 See Hume, Development, 355.

126 The Country-Wife and The Man of Mode undoubtedly contain satiric elements—the question of whether they are “satires” has been much debated, probably insolubly so—but what are Wycherley and Etherege trying to achieve with these plays? If either of the plays has a central satiric thrust or communicates a coherent message, then that meaning has eluded scholars. As Hume observes, “The meaning-mongers who dive deep into The Country-Wife or The Man of Mode without realizing the degree to which these plays are formulaic simply make fools of
between gentlemen Tories and citizen Whigs in Ravenscroft’s play has implicit socio-political significance, particularly in 1681—but I have trouble seeing why most viewers would have taken it at all seriously. It seems essentially a lighter, brighter, more frivolous enterprise.

Thomas Otway’s social satires, on the contrary, exhibit unmitigated contempt and disgust. The world of *Friendship in Fashion* (1678) is a place of vile inanity. Infidelity and betrayal are inevitable (they are “in fashion”), though such failings are not to be laughed at or trivialized. The protagonist, Goodvile, is bored with his wife and tries to seduce his friend Valentine’s fiancée; meanwhile, he is pursued by his cast mistress, whom he tries to marry off to another friend, Truman. Mrs. Goodvile is aware of her husband’s disloyalty but feigns ignorance while she sleeps with Truman. Goodvile’s attempts to bed Valentine’s betrothed fail, though he unwittingly has sex with an undesirable woman thinking her to be his targeted prey (she is just as surprised, having supposed him to be Truman). In the end, Goodvile finds out about his wife’s intrigues but cannot catch her in the act: he is stuck with the spouse he does not want, the knowledge of his friend’s betrayal, and the cuckold’s horns. He is far and away the most monstrous of the lot, but none of the characters represents a positive norm. They are all cold-bloodedly self-seeking, capable of deception and entirely willing to deceive. The conclusion is bleak: “Otway slams home a realization of just how ugly these relations will continue to be. We are shown a brutally unappetizing world—and that is exactly the point of the play.”

Both *The London Cuckolds* themselves” (*Rakish Stage*, 6). *The Man of Mode*, he concludes, is “full of ideas, libertine attitudes, and glancing commentary on issues of the time. But it makes no overall statement, and it has no message” (43).

127 J. Douglas Canfield takes this play—and cuckolding comedy more generally—very seriously: “Cuckolding plays of the late 1670s and early 1680s,” he argues, “simply peel back the civilized veneer to reveal the naked power politics of class warfare beneath. . . . [T]he perfect, potent bodies of Cavalier rakes dominate over the imperfect, impotent bodies of the Cits and . . . the bodies of women become the contested ground for class dominance and, ultimately, symbols of the contested land of England.” See *Tricksters & Estates: On the Ideology of Restoration Comedy* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 2. For his reading of class warfare in *The London Cuckolds*, see pp. 87-88. Mark S. Dawson has recently—and I think rightly—challenged Canfield’s interpretation of city cuckolding comedy as oversimplified and badly misleading; see *Gentility and the Comic Theatre of Late Stuart London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 42.

128 Hume, “Otway and the Comic Muse,” *Studies in Philology* 73 (1976): 87-116, at 96. In this play and in *Venice Preserv’d*, “broken oaths are legion.” As Hume explains, “Nowhere in human institutions does Otway find meaningful substance. Marriage, friendship, parental feeling, government—all turn out to be unreliable mockeries of the meaning and order they symbolize and burlesque. The amount of ritual ceremony—oaths, greetings,
Cuckolds and Friendship in Fashion involve unsatisfying marriages, sexual intrigues, and adultery, and the crux of the latter play shares something with Oldham’s in the Satyr Against Vertue—but in Otway we are a world away from Ravenscroft and Oldham. Friendship in Fashion is a strongly moral satire; its author is passing judgment. Hughes suggests that The London Cuckolds shows “no interest whatsoever in analyzing or evaluating sexual conduct,”129 and the absence of such reckoning is important. And whereas Dryden is not amused by the scenes he describes in the comic plot of Marriage A-la-Mode, Otway is thoroughly sickened. Both satirists are engaged in ways that Ravenscroft is not; both plays have clear-cut morals that The Man of Mode does not. Dryden voices disapproval, Otway voices disgust—and they mean it.130

So does Nat Lee, whose The Princess of Cleve (Dec. 1682?; pub. 1689) is a bitter, uncompromisingly grim social satire, as well as a vastly under-appreciated play. The titular female confesses her love for Duke Nemours, a swinish and cynical whoremonger, and her doting prince—overcome by unrequited love and jealousy—expires. Nemours is never punished for his wickedness, and at the play’s end he remains as powerful and as alluring as ever. The real-life model for Nemours was Rochester, and Lee’s villain is a wholly unromanticized image of the libertine ethos. But when Nemours says that he is no worse than those around him, we are inclined to accept his verdict: “Why ’tis the way of ye all, only you sneak with it under your Cloaks like Taylors and Barbers; and I, as a Gentleman shou’d do, walk with it in my hand.”131 Lee does not give us much to balance the negative picture. Certainly the drivelng prince and the uncomprehending princess do not represent ideals. He blasts the upper classes, court life in general, and Rochester in particular. He attacks the ethos both of libertine comedy and of orations—in Otway’s plays is staggering. . . . The point is that these forms are hollow: they cannot be trusted, because they have no relation to any larger sense of meaning and order” (112).

129 Hughes, English Drama 1660-1700, 230.
130 As Hume argues, Otway “does not believe in any moral order that [can] be restored. This is not to say that Otway does not wish to uphold honor, friendship, and virtue. Indeed the bitter negativism of his plays is clearly a reflection of his passionate wish to uphold high ideals of duty and friendship, and his frustration at being unable to do so.” See “The Unconventional Tragedies of Thomas Otway,” in Du verbe au geste: Mélanges en l’honneur de Pierre Danchin (Nancy: Presses Universitaires de Nancy, 1986), 67-78, at 74.
heroic drama: as Hume explains, he “brings the two value systems together and lets each expose the hollowness and inadequacy of the other.” *The Princess of Cleve* “is more a despairing than an angry satire: we are not given a comfortable sermon from a superior vantage point, but rather a brutal exposé whose author can find no meaningful positive norm. . . . The result is a dizzying and deliberately sickening view into a moral abyss.”

Like Otway in *Friendship in Fashion* and *The Souldiers Fortune* (1680), Lee can find no clear-cut positives to present.

### VI. Chronological change, 1650-1685

Carolean satire, as I have tried to show, comprises very different sorts of works; uniformity is not to be found at any given moment. We need also to attend to variation over time. Satire in the reign of Charles II tends to be time-specific and local—and an account of it or of its component bits ought to take into account the external realities of the world in which it was written.

Did the return of Charles II produce a change in the nature of English satiric practice? Most scholars who discuss Carolean satire begin in 1660 and look forward, assuming 1660 to be a tidy dividing line. The few who have studied pre- and post-Restoration satire together—in particular, Harold F. Brooks, Margaret Anne Doody, and Nigel Smith—have sensibly argued for continuity across that period.

These critics emphasize the debts of writers like Butler, Marvell, Oldham, and Dryden to mid-century satirists like Cleveland, whose works were reprinted regularly in the 1660s, and also in the later 1670s. Brooks points out, moreover, that individual satires of the 1640s and 1650s are reprinted in

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134 J. Cleaveland Revived: Poems, Orations, Epistles (1659, 1660, 1662, 1668); Poems by John Cleavland (1661, 1662, 1665, 1669). Published in 1677: Clievelandi Vindiciae: or, Cleleveland’s Genuine Poems, Orations, Epistles, &c. purged from The many False and Spurious Ones which had usurped his Name, And from innumerable Errours and Corruptions in the True Copies. Some of Cleveland’s individual works reappear under slightly different titles in the Carolean period: his *The Hue and Cry after Sir John Presbyter* (a 1649 broadside) was reprinted as *The Loyal Livery-Mens Hue and Cry after Sir John Presbyter* (acquired by Luttrell in 1683 for 1 d).
miscellanies after the Restoration, and that the popular satiric genres of the civil war and interregnum remain current in the reign of Charles II (e.g., parodies, litanies, dream-visions, paradoxical encomia, and character sketches). The two-volume *Rump Songs* (1662) put more than 200 earlier seventeenth-century poems into circulation; a high proportion of those collected in volume one are royalist, anti-puritan satires of the forties and fifties. Obviously the satirists of the 1660s did not emerge *ex nihilo* when Charles claimed crown and mitre: Marvell, Butler, and Dryden were active under Cromwell, and the minor Cavalier satirist Alexander Brome (among others) published from the early 1640s to the early 1660s. Some Carolean satirists had to have been influenced by the works circulating in the decade before the Restoration.

The re-establishment of Stuart monarchy did not mark a sudden and complete transformation of satiric practice—but did anything change? Satire is almost always tied to external particulars: even when it has general application, it tends to be topical and circumstantial. The replacement of one regime with another necessarily affected writers’ sense of their world, for better or worse depending on their outlook. The Restoration was a public event of major—if uncertain—import, and the resultant settlement influenced at least some satirists. Proud loyalists drubbed the radicals, though not always only the radicals, and disgruntled Cavaliers complained about the conspicuous absence of rewards for their allegiance. The political transition and concomitant social changes created new situations and thus new material for satire. In the early 1660s, as I have already argued, a number of royalist writers heaped scorn upon the radicals while also expressing doubt, unease, and sometimes overt disapproval of their own party. The first years of Charles’s reign were particularly conducive to such camouflaged attacks, in part because so much of the settlement was decidedly *unsettled* (would this regime last, and on what terms?)

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John Phillips’s *A Satyr Against Hypocrites* (1655) is also reprinted several times in the Carolean period (1661, 1671, 1674, 1677, and 1680); Cowley’s *Puritan and the Papist. A Satyr* is dated 1681/82.


and in part because the ill treatment of Cavaliers tainted their triumphalism. As happy as most writers were to see the last of Cromwell and company, these were not—as Lord has deemed them—the “halcyon” days. Lord blithely claims that, with the exception of “one or two inferior squibs on the plight of the Cavaliers,” criticism of the restored monarchy did not begin until late in the 1660s. The mode and intensity of the attacks change, but even some adamantly pro-monarchy satirists were discontented with and anxious about Charles’s management of the state in the early 1660s.

The situation worsens considerably in the second half of the decade. The five years following the Restoration saw overt and sometimes covert disparagement of the government, but what those critics were voicing was not disgust but annoyance and alarm. That the state of affairs would deteriorate rather than improve was not yet clear, and for a while at least some of Charles’s detractors could be hopeful even in their disgruntlement. But the plague, the fire, the Second Dutch War, the impeachment of Clarendon, and the increasing problem of the king’s intemperance fostered a noticeable tonal shift in satire. As the mismanagement of the state became ever clearer, satire grew gloomier and more reflective of distress. The first two parts of Hudibras differ from the third not only in subject matter and target but in tone and intensity; appearing some fifteen years later, the last part is neither so comical nor so indirect in its political message as its predecessors. The Presbyterian Lash (1661) and Richard Brathwaite’s The Chimneys Scuffle (1662) issue warnings, showing us a world in which the threat has been or threatens to be realized. But prophetic satires later in the period (e.g., Advice to a Painter to Draw the Duke by [wr. 1673], Hodge [wr. 1679], and A Satyr against Satyrs: or, St. Peter’s Vision Transubstantiated [1680]) tend to be not monitory but minatory—heavy-handedly sinister and very direct about what is happening or likely to happen. Hodge ends portentously. The titular English rustic worriedly surveys the state of affairs, has a vision of James and Kate slaying Charles, cries out (“Plots, Papists, murders, massacres, and

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137 See, for example, Brome’s The Cavalier, a short verse complaint penned by a disappointed loyalist soon after Charles’s return. The rebels, the poet laments, “creep into profit and power,” and the king’s men “are low,” and “Shall be kept so / While those domineer and devour” (ll. 27, 30-32). Brome still holds out hope, however, concluding his poem with a tentative suggestion that in time the balance of power might eventually shift in favor of the royalists.

fire! / Poor Protestants”), and then falls over dead (ll. 166-67). The satire is neither particularly clever nor especially brilliant, but it does sharply and bluntly communicate its author’s fears. All of these works convey a level of authorial anxiety and are cautionary, but, generally speaking, Carolean vision satires are darker, more ominous, and less funny after the first decade of Charles’s reign.

Satires are distinctly sourer in the 1670s. Satirists in the late 1660s targeted Clarendon and other government officials for incompetence and even treachery; in the next decade, personal slurs directed at figures close to the king and at the monarch himself are more widespread and quite a lot nastier. Satire after culpatory satire lashes Charles, his brother, and his mistresses. Satirists vilify his ministers (The Dream of the Cabal [wr. 1672]) and his favorite filius nullius, Monmouth (A Ballad called the Haymarket Hectors, On the Three Dukes Killing the Beadle, and Upon the Beadle [all wr. 1671]). The aggrieved satirist of The History of Insipids (wr. 1674) bitterly scorches the monarch and the too-obliging Parliament; reviews the myriad instances of governmental scandal and misconduct since the Restoration; and, reflecting on Thomas Blood’s earning favor at court after attempting to thieve the crown, proposes that, “Since loyalty doth no man good, / Let’s seize the King and outdo Blood” (ll. 47-48). From the early 1670s come Nevil Payne’s ferocious Siege of Constantinople (1674), most of Rochester’s verse satires, the enraged A Dialogue between the Two Horses (wr. 1676), and Ayloffe’s wrathful Britannia and Raleigh.

With the Popish Plot and the Exclusion Crisis came much greater cause for alarm, and—unsurprisingly—satire of this period often reflects panic as much as sheer indignation. To grumble about

139 See also The Dream of the Cabal, the context of which includes Charles’s prorogation of parliament in 1671 and the negotiations occurring between England and France during that prorogation. At the end of the conference, six of the seven ministers have urged Charles to ally England with France—a course of action the satirist clearly dislikes and fears. The poet awakens in the final lines, but far from dismissing the meeting as unreal, he foretells ominously that, “‘Tis ten to one but I shall dream again” (l.384).

140 As Steven N. Zwicker explains, “Just as it had been customary to attack a King’s policies through his suppositious ‘evil ministers’, so was it now easier to attack Charles’s morals through his relatives and mistresses”; “Virgins and Whores: the Politics of Sexual Misconduct in the 1660s,” in The Political Identity of Andrew Marvell, ed. Condren and Cousins, 85-111, at 93.

141 Lord tentatively ascribes this poem to Ayloffe, largely because of the intensity of its bitterness (“the gods have repented the King’s Restoration” [l. 162]) and its republican undertones. Ayloffe might well have believed that a return to republicanism would be a solution to England’s troubles, but the level of negativity in this satire (as in Britannia and Raleigh) suggests some awareness that such a change is unlikely, if not impossible.
government ineptitude in the Third Dutch War is one thing; when Charles sprinkles bastards all over the land but cannot sire a legitimate (Protestant) heir, frustration gives way to sick anxiety. Stephen College’s notoriously declamatory satires were produced in this period, including the desperately worried *Truth Brought to Light Or Murder Will Out* (wr. 1679), *Justice in Masquerade* (wr. 1679; pub. 1680), and *Raree Show* (1681), the last of which contributed to his being executed for treason.142 A number of satirists responded apprehensively to the slaying of Godfrey (e.g., *On the Murder of Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey* [wr. 1678] and *Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey’s Ghost* [wr. 1679]). Other angst-ridden satires include the anti-Catholic and anti-York *A Psalm* (wr. 1679); *The Grand Imposture or the Mystery of Iniquity: A Satyr* (1679); and *A Tale of the Tubs, or Rome’s Masterpiece Defeated* (wr. 1679), in which the Jesuits vow to “make all England stagger ere’t be long” and to “strike the stroke may ruin Christendom” (ll. 90, 92). In *Naboth’s Vineyard* (1679), John Caryll (a Catholic who spent time in the Tower during the Popish Plot) objects to the persecution of his co-religionists.143 As Dryden would do in *Absalom and Achitophel*, Caryll reviles Shaftesbury for provoking the “giddy rabble” with sham accusations (l. 37). The satire concludes with poetic justice of a sort. Shaftesbury and his wife are left, at the poem’s end, dreading the “fate to come” (l. 497). Nevertheless, the plight of Naboth—the predictability with which the innocent man is “exposed” and found guilty by a perverse justice system—is appalling, and that the principal agitators are punished does nothing to right that wrong. Political satire produced in this period is essentially different in kind from that which would be directed at Walpole and the “Robinocracy” in the 1730s. The screenmaster general’s power was, until very late in his reign, fairly secure. Satires directed at the government during a volatile situation, as in the autumn of 1681, have a great deal more urgency and more potential significance than those written in times of relative stability.


143 The only serious analysis of this poem is by Michael F. Suarez, S. J., a sensitive and judicious attempt to place it in its theological, political, and legal contexts. See “A Crisis in English Public Life: The Popish Plot, *Naboth’s Vineyard* (1679), and Mock-Biblical Satire’s Exemplary Redress,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 67 (2004): 529-52.
Satires from late 1682 through the end of Charles’s reign are mostly rather different from those of the earlier Carolean period. Attacks on Shaftesbury and Monmouth continue well after the former has fled England and even after his death, but the Whigs are no longer the threat that they had been—and they know that as well as the Tories. John Dean’s *Iter Boreale* (1682) is a poem of mock-mourning written after Slingsby Bethel’s departure from London, an event that represented “the first real evidence that the Whig control was beginning to break.”\(^{144}\) Dean’s satire is an exultant piece of Tory triumphalism, and others of his party struck the same note. The author of *Satire, or Song* (wr. 1682) surveys the political landscape, observing that the Whigs are gone, the Tories jubilant, and that “The Raree Show will be sung no more” (l. 29). Whigs were not silent, of course. The Whig satirist of *To the Loyal Londoners* (wr. 1682) features as his speaker an ominously jeering Tory whose newfound supremacy (the author implies) will have dire consequences, the prospect of which is meant to make “loyal” Englishmen shudder. *A New Ballad To the tune of The Irish Jig* (wr. 1684) is an even later and more caustic piece of Opposition satire. Sharp rebukes of the government can be found (e.g., *A Merry New Ballad: In Answer to Old Rowley the King* [wr. 1683]), but much of the political satire has little bite.\(^{145}\) *Song, Old Rowley the King* (wr. 1683) has a “delightful ‘plague on both your houses’ attitude,” and Thomas Durfey’s *The New-Market Song* (1684) likewise exhibits little party feeling: “Whigs are damned more from habit than passion,” says Howard H. Schless, “and Tories are admired but not apostrophized.”\(^{146}\)

My point here is not to attempt to define satiric practice at any particular moment, but to suggest the importance of contextual changes to the kind of satire produced. Again, I return to the example of *Hudibras*: treating that work as a “Restoration satire” badly obscures the degree to which the individual parts belong to their respective moments—1662 and 1663 are significantly different in politico-religious

\(^{144}\) Schless, *POAS-Y*, 3:345.

\(^{145}\) *A New Litany in the Year 1684* is more complaint than attack, and is tied very closely to the circumstances of its particular moment. This satire “gives voice to Whig helplessness in the face of Charles’ judicial vengeance” (Schless, *POAS-Y*, 3:571). *A Litany for the Fifth of November 1684* likewise expresses grievances against the king. The author “is not so much pro-Whig as anti-Court, pointing out the deceptions and injustices of Charles’ reign” (574).

terms, and 1677-78 is another world altogether. Attitudes and levels of trepidation or outrage obviously differ from satirist to satirist. Not all or even most Exclusion Crisis or Second Dutch War satires are alike in tone, intensity, or purpose. And things can change drastically even over a very brief span of time, as we well understand: American political culture was not on 12 September 2001 what it had been forty-eight hours earlier. We can find similar works produced in different decades, especially in the realm of moral and social satire—but the overall, predominant character changes across this period. The targets and the nature of the satire alter within half-decades or more frequently, and the practice at any given moment is far from uniform. These works are not much like earlier or later satires, but they are not best explained as part of a well-defined and consistently applicable concept of “Carolean satire.”

VII. Issues: satiric intensity, tone, positives—and the problem of application

If we are looking not at particular Carolean authors and works or at chronological subsections but at more general characteristics, what distinctions are to be found in satiric practice?

Intensity

We need to see the full range of satiric intensity—from frivolity (The London Cuckolds) and snide recitation of popular attacks (as in some of the court lampoons) to genuine hostility (Clarendon’s Housewarming) and unmitigated disgust (John Phillips’s A Satyr Against Hypocrites). The level of authorial commitment matters. I admit that interpretation of tone as of content is often going to differ for different readers. Some satires that I take as articulations of genuine disapproval or anxiety may in fact have been written as ironic romps, and some that I read as fireworks produced with gusto but no real commitment could be wholly in earnest. Determining commitment is impossible to do with certitude, but satire is a purposive form of writing, and in a fair number of cases we can make reasonable guesses about

147 Harth’s Pen for a Party is a good illustration of the utility of chronological precision. As Harth rightly argues, “the Tory propaganda” of late Carolean England “is by no means a single entity” (x). Attending to its three component “campaigns,” as Harth’s study demonstrates, allows us to understand Dryden’s contributions as propagandist much more fully and accurately.
motive and intensity. In the *Satyr Against Vertue*, Oldham presents a lot of bad news; he is, at least on the surface, complaining about a debauched world. But I suspect that the recounting of ills is to some extent *pro forma*. Reading Otway’s social satire alongside Oldham does much to accentuate the depth and ferocity of the playwright’s revulsion. The question here is how personally committed the author is to the attack that he is launching: is he actually passing judgment? The answer varies from satire to satire. Scholars tend to think of satire as attack, which in many cases of course it is. But attack without animosity is quite different from satire that denounces with real rancor. *The Sullen Lovers, The Rehearsal, Upon Nothinge*, and *The Medall* are all instances of or include satiric attack—but they hardly represent kindred ventures. We need to make distinctions.

*Tone*

Very little attention has been paid to tonal variations in satire, in part because the best satires are assumed to be either admirably solemn and restrained (because highly moral) or savagely funny (if unsporting). Irony is a problem. If we know enough about an author, then we have some chance at recognizing the presence of irony in his or her text. The assertions made in a work like Swift’s *Modest Proposal* are sufficiently extreme that we think to look for irony. But if we do not have confidence in our comprehension of what the authorial meaning must be, and if the text’s argument does not give itself away, then we are in muddy waters. Oldham is sometimes described as the post-Restoration inheritor of Cleveland’s furious scurrility, but, as Selden rightly suggests, he “outdoes” Cleveland with his use of “satiric hyperbole.”

Cleveland’s *The Rebell Scot* was originally composed just after the Scots joined the war on the side of Parliament, and he damns them wholesale as a brood of traitorous devils. Here and in *The Scots Apostacy*, his execration of a political enemy is vindictive, probably giving vent to visceral hatred, whereas there is some chance that Oldham’s fiery declamations are basically performances. And if Oldham’s “curses” suggest that smoke does not necessarily signal fire, then the example of *Absalom*

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and Achitophel makes plain that tonal restraint does not always denote indifference. Tone is not a perfect indicator of intensity—but in quite a few cases, it is a fairly vital key to the nature of the enterprise and the effect desired. What sort of tonal range does Carolean satire exhibit?

Satires like Seigneur Dildoe and The London Cuckolds are jolly. The first two parts of Hudibras are comical even if Butler is not amused by the world he describes. Not all superficially lively satires are actually funny. Some are witty and clever, but cleverness does not invariably signal authorial delight. In The King’s Vows (wr. 1670), Charles “recites the chief misdemeanors with which he was charged during the first decade of his reign.” Rollicking as the monarch’s enumeration of disturbing intentions is, the account is not cheerful. Charles merrily details how things will go, pledging to follow his prerogative without restraint, popular sentiment be damned: “If this please not, I’ll reign upon any condition” (l. 46). A similar example is The King’s Farewell to Danby (wr. 1679), a poem written in the wake of Danby’s impeachment. An alarmingly buoyant Charles breezily exposes himself as just as guilty as his fallen minister, and he revels in his own treachery and in the fact that Danby has taken the blame. “I must leave thee to hang,” says the sovereign to the earl. The pardon the king promised Danby signified nothing. It does not matter at all,

like all the oaths we’ve sworn to defend
The Protestant cause, which we ne’er did intend;
Or like all the tricks we’ve play’d since we came
To ride on the necks of a people so tame. (ll. 4, 21-24)

As in The King’s Vows, Charles swears here to “rule by my will,”—or to “follow my father once more to Edgehill” (33-34). The lampoon has bounce, but the recollection of the clash between parliamentary privilege and royal prerogative (and the ensuing civil war) is no laughing matter. In A New Ballad, to an Old Tune, Call’d, I Am the Duke of Norfolk, etc. (wr. 1679), Charles just as gaily exposes himself: “I am a

149 Of the former, Love suggests that hearing it sung to its original tune (“Peggy’s gone over sea with the soldier”) “locates it socially as an improvisatorial drinking song in a way that gives point to what on the page is a rather tedious repetition of a rudimentary joke” (Scribal Publication, 234).
150 Lord, POAS-Y, 1:159.
senseless thing, with a hey, with a hey,” he sings, and “I corrupted the age, with a ho; / The nation once
were men / But now are slaves again, / With a hey tronny nonny nonny no” (ll. 1, 12-15).151

Some satires are remarkably unpleasant in their cheerlessness. In Otway’s Friendship in
Fashion, as Hume points out, “there is no fun, no exuberance, and no wit—merely a string of ugly and
contemptible events.”152 Rochester is capable of the same degree of negativity, though his energy and his
obscenities give his works a verve that Otway’s satire lacks. Most verse satires do not achieve the depth
of gloom that Friendship in Fashion presents—but some are plenty somber.153 A Ballad called the
Haymarket Hectors (wr. 1671) is a response to the attack on Sir John Coventry. Coventry had made a
snide remark about Charles and his mistresses, and his punishment for that crime was a beating by twenty
Life Guards; Monmouth was evidently not among them, but as captain of the King’s Life Guard he
almost certainly gave the orders.154 The poet criticizes the “flippant” Charles and Nell Gywn, his
“Bitchington travesty” (ll. 8, 16), and the final lines express concern that at Nell’s command a war could
be started: “Should you but name the prerogative whore, / How the bullets would whistle, the cannon
would roar!” Two other satires of the same year—On the Three Dukes Killing the Beadle and Upon the
Beadle—address the murder of a beadle by Monmouth and other members of the nobility, all of whom
were pardoned.155 Upon the Beadle ends with an image of “one poor old man” having been “subdued” by
the dukes, but the other poem is yet more tragic, its author’s denunciation of the “bastard dukes” even
more chillingly unfunny: “See these men dance, all daub’d with lace and blood” (ll. 12, 36). The

151 The Satire on Old Rowley (wr. 1680) is another lively but incisive indictment of Charles, though in this
case he is not made the speaker but is instead described as a reckless playboy whose failings endanger England.
153 See, for example, the oppressively disgusted A Satire in Answer to a Friend (wr. 1682?) and A Loyal
Satyr against Whiggism (1682). In the former, the author “inspects both the Courts and the City from a moral rather
than a political point of view and shows his ultimate despair by rejecting the corrupt age in which he lives” (Schless,
POAS-Y, 3:28). An earlier example is Brome’s The Satyr of Money (wr. 1653?; pub. 1661), a petulant denunciation
of a uniformly unprincipled society. The poem was written during the Cromwellian regime—the world turned
upside down, from the point of view of a devoted Cavalier—and reflects Brome’s despairing perception of moral (as
well as political) topsy-turvydom.
154 Lord, POAS-Y, 1:168.
155 This event was connected to the assault on Coventry, as Lord explains: “Unchastened by the outraged
public reaction to the attack on Sir John Coventry in December, Monmouth took part in a brawl inside a brothel . . .
a few weeks later in which a beadle named Peter Vernell was murdered, ‘praying for his life upon his knees’”
(POAS-Y, 1:172). Lord is quoting a letter from Marvell to Mayor Ackham, 28 February 1671.
The satire has sober implications—the author is alarmed about the succession and, ultimately, about the fate of England—but Monmouth is an unimpressive booby, not (as in the Coventry and Beadle poems) a sadistic thug.156

These satires are not mere flippant diatribes, and they are not all fun. Friendship in Fashion and the Beadle poems are not sober in the way Pope’s Moral Essays are sober; they seem to indicate intensely-felt unhappiness, apprehension, loathing, even terror. So are the anonymous A Summons from a True Protestant Conjuror to Cethagus’ Ghost and its sequel, Cethagus’ Apology for Non-Appearance upon his Conjuror’s Summons (1682), both darkly humorless. In the former, the Tory author has a radical nonconformist speak so as to expose his own treachery. The current Whigs are associated with the sectarians of the 1640s as king-killing conspirators: “Rise Peters, Nol, Scroop, Scott, Hell’s modern furies; / Meet Satan, fire and brimstone, and Whig juries” (ll. 38-39). “Restoration satire” is almost always regarded as crude and coarse, but its abrasiveness has as much to do with Carolean satirists’ propensity for unrestrained personal venom as with the degree of real hostility found in these works. The unbridled articulation of genuine outrage, fear, and disgust—often apparently not delivered for the sake of the performance, and not leavened by wit—can be overwhelming. This satire is sometimes simply about venting, sometimes about warning readers, sometimes about producing real anxiety as a way of provoking

156 Love deals helpfully with a number of satires directed at Monmouth, detailing the common charges made against him and tracing changing attitudes over time toward the King’s favorite bastard (English Clandestine Satire, 131-39).
agitation against the target or subject, and sometimes about spreading gloom. It is neither play nor display, and is being used not simply to attack and certainly not to reform its targets.

Presentation of positives

Antagonism can be expressed in jingoistic high-jinks, in disgruntled objections, or in blistering invective, but Carolean satire cannot be explained adequately in terms of aggression. In 1963 Ruth Nevo suggested that, “Satire is not the only channel for the political impulse, since there is always a cause, or a personality, to be fought for, as well as against.” Hers is a standard assumption: satire’s purposes are negative rather than positive, the latter being the province of panegyric. Griffin downplays the role of “ideology” in satire, concluding that, “The satirist’s primary goal as writer is not to declare political principles but to respond to a particular occasion and to write a good satire.” He substantiates this claim with reference to Butler (arguing that Hudibras has no positive values), Rochester (whom he suggests is largely apolitical in his satires), Dryden (who “appeals at last not to principle but to pragmatism”), and Swift and Pope. Griffin’s contention does not hold for all or even most Carolean satires: like The Country Gentleman and Hudibras, a number of these works are clearly written in defense of something the writer believes in, political or otherwise.

Some satires in this period are better understood in terms of what they support than what they attack. Christopher Wase’s Divination (1666), a response to the Second Advice, is an attempt to refute the author of that poem, but his primary point is to defend the government. Robert Wild’s Iter Boreale (1660) at once lampoons the radicals (the “rebellious rout” [l. 25]) and exults in the king’s return. Dean’s 1682 satire of the same title is likewise predominantly positive. A Tory, Dean is ironically lamenting the

157 Nevo, The Dial of Virtue: A Study of Poems on Affairs of State in the Seventeenth Century (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 6. More recently, Hunter has argued that for these writers, “the inevitable other side of panegyric was satire: opposition, attack, derogation, lampoon, undermining—persuasion against, which was simply the opposite of celebration or argument in favour” (“Political, satirical, didactic and lyric poetry,” 184).

158 Griffin, Satire, 150-51. Griffin is challenging the notion that political satire is always “written from a clearly defined political position.” He argues that “we should suspect that what looks like principle is often a blend of literary and political opportunity, personal circumstance, and an attempt to discredit a particular person or party or to advance a literary career” (150). I entirely agree with Griffin’s warning, but replacing one generalization with another is problematic.
departure of Slingsby Bethel from the city, an event which marked the beginning of the end of Whig control of London. The speaker of The Banished Priests’ Farewell to the House of Commons (wr. 1673) addresses the Parliament that has just ordered Charles to cancel the Declaration of Indulgence (1672) and assent to the Test Act, in exchange for which they will supply funding for the Dutch War. The satirist angrily blasts the anti-tolerant Parliamentarians as “sots” and “high-shod clowns” (ll. 1, 4). In a vehemently pro-Catholic (and pro-Indulgence) satire, he savages his foes.

Go, get you home, you rustics! You dictate
T’ his Majesty the great intrigues of state?
Must your hodge-podge, piss’d upon religion be
The standard of all worship, and must we
To that bald bawdy stuff submit, who name
The codpiece can, and cause from whence it came?
Go, silly fops, assure yourselves that we
To any sect will turn, before yours we’ll be. (ll. 97-104)

The author is livid, and one can understand why: he is a Catholic (or at least a Catholic sympathizer), and his targets are “bumpkins” pressing the king to revoke toleration and enforce religious conformity (l. 105). His lashing of the Parliamentarians is ferocious, but “they” are not the point. Lord likens this satire to A Charge to the Grand Inquest of England (wr. 1674), which he describes as “a rare piece of pro-government propaganda.” That poem caustically denounces the parliamentary opposition to Charles (“of all plagues with which this nation’s curs’d / The privilege of Parliament is worst” [ll. 68–69]) and uncompromisingly defends royal prerogative. Other Tory satires that abuse the Whigs as a way of defending Charles in particular and royal prerogative more broadly are The Character (wr. 1679), Matthew Taubman’s Philander (1680), The Parliament Dissolved at Oxford (wr. 1681), and A New Ballad of London’s Loyalty (1681). Other satires with at least implicit positive agendas include the following: Wild’s The Loyal Nonconformist (1666); Queries (wr. 1679); Dorset’s On the Young

159 Lord, POAS-Y, 1:221.
Statesmen (wr. 1680); A Bill on the House of Commons’ Door (wr. 1680); and Thomas Thompson’s Midsummer Moon (1682).  

A markedly different sort of positive satire is that of John Bunyan, whose Christian allegories are a universe away from (say) Rochester’s bawdy diatribes but who does belong to the Carolean satiric milieu. Pilgrim’s Progress came out in the same year (1678) that The Kind Keeper was produced and Oldham’s Satyrs upon the Jesuits began to appear, and The Life and Death of Mr. Badman (1680) was published in the year that The Spanish Fryar was staged. What kind of satire do Bunyan’s allegories include? Brainerd P. Stranahan suggests that what is so remarkable about the satire of The Pilgrim’s Progress “is that its premises are so firmly on the Lord’s side rather than on the devil’s.” Bunyan is a true believer, “using the Bible to roast the complacent foes of Christianity” and “to laugh away the fears of the faint-hearted faithful.” His satire is homiletic, addressing not his enemies but his friends, those who share his moral and theological convictions. The eponymous character of The Life and Death of Mr. Badman is, of course, a bad man, one who commits all the sins proscribed in Puritan conduct manuals. Badman has some material success, but what Bunyan emphasizes is “the ugliness and sheer uncomfortableness of his way of life.” He is a thoroughly negative example, “a model not to be emulated if indeed we wish to escape hell.” This is Vice made ridiculous for the sake of the ultimately Virtuous. It is precisely the sort of instructive derision for which in 1740 Henry Fielding would extol Hogarth “as one of the most useful Satyrists any Age hath produced.”

Both Pilgrim’s Progress and Badman

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160 Positive-agenda satire is a conspicuous phenomenon in the Carolean period. Yet further examples are A Pulpit to be Let (1665); Swearing and Lying (1666); A Ballad. Nov. 1680 (wr. 1680); The Rabble (wr. 1680); On the Prorogation to the 17th of May 1680 (wr. 1680); and Popish Politics Unmasked (wr. 1680).


163 Fielding, The Champion, 10 June 1740; Contributions to The Champion and Related Writings, ed. Coley, 365.
include caustic social satire, but they are didactic rather than punitive and strongly positive enterprises, such as we will later find in Defoe.

Carolean satires vary in force and passion, in degree of levity and sobriety, in purpose and in method. A surprisingly high number of them have at least an implicit positive agenda, and so are more adequately comprehended in terms of what they are defending than in what they are decrying or whom they are abusing. Insofar as modern critics discuss the “positive” in satire, they usually have in mind the sweet-sounding vows of reformative intentions rather than any practical agendas in the works themselves. Very few Carolean satires promise moral reform or exhibit buoyant Pollyannism—but several of these writers clearly believed that something was worth defending and even that satire could be productive, if in very local and specific ways. The extent to which Carolean satire is a positive as well as a negative enterprise has been vastly underestimated.

The problem of application

Carolean satirists are often devastatingly blunt in their judgments—blasting their targets in words of one syllable—but satiric meaning is often a matter of application and implication rather than explicit attack. Did Sir Robert Howard mean The Great Favourite, or the Duke of Lerma (1668) to be a “parallel” satire on current events and on Charles II? Pepys believed so, and expressed discomfort: “The play designed to reproach our King with his mistress; that I was troubled for it, and expected it should be interrupted; but it ended all well, which salved all. The play a well-writ and good play; only, its design I did not like, of reproaching the King.” Hughes describes the play as an anti-Clarendon satire, in which “a weak,

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166 The Diary of Samuel Pepys, 9:81 (20 February 1668).
manipulable, and amorous king is reformed and the ambitious and evil Duke of Lerma is finally neutralized,” though remaining “in triumphant impunity because of his rank as cardinal.” Such a reading is not unthinkable, but Pepys’s entry is all we have to substantiate it. Whether Howard conceived of his play as an indirect satire on Charles and contemporary politics we have no way of determining. Such “application” depends upon the eye of the beholder.

Edward Howard’s *The Change of Crownes* (1667; not pub. until the twentieth century) was also taken as obnoxious satire, not by Pepys but by the king, who personally suppressed the play. The high plot is heavy on the theme of heroic love, but the low plot is funny, vigorously ridiculing influence-peddlers at court and seekers of government posts. Pepys gave *The Change of Crownes* a rave review (“the best play that I ever saw at that House”), but also complained that, “only, Lacy did act the country gentleman come up to Court, who doth abuse the Court with all the imaginable wit and plainness, about selling of places and doing everything for money.” Lacy played Asinello, an avid if simple-minded place-seeker—and, however much even the loyal Pepys delighted in the performance, Charles was not amused. Lacy was promptly arrested, leading to a row between him and the playwright.

In the one case we have an apparent application for which we have no evidence of either authorial intention or audience comprehension beyond Pepys. In the other, we can only guess what the playwright...

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168 Howard’s play might “be called a case of disaster averted. The failure of Lerma’s power schemes (exciting in themselves) leads to the suicide and execution of his cohorts, and abandoned by his own brother, Lerma is summoned before Authority to receive what can only be a death sentence. There are few more thrilling scenes in all this drama . . . ‘than when he appears not as a suppliant or guilty, but in all the pomp of pontifical state, clad in his sweeping scarlet robes, My Lord Cardinal, a sovran prince, whose sacred person the Grandees dare not touch nor molest.’ This dazzling reversal comes as an utter surprise, though we realize as we see it that we have misunderstood a series of teasing hints. Lerma’s virtuous daughter Maria is rewarded with marriage to the King, but the heart of the play is the escape of the villain” (Hume, *Development*, 215). Hume is quoting Montague Summers, *The Playhouse of Pepys* (London: Macmillan, 1935), 177.

169 *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, 8:167-68 (15 April 1667).

170 Pepys tells of Lacy’s arrest: the actor “cursed” Howard (“it was the fault of his nonsensical play that was the cause of his ill usage”), and told the playwright “that he was more a fool then a poet; on which Howard did give him a blow on the face with his glove; on which Lacy, having a cane in his hand, did give him a blow over the pate. Here, Rolt and others that discoursed of it in the pit this afternoon did wonder that Howard did not run him through, he being too mean a fellow to fight with—but Howard did not do anything but complain to the King of it; so the whole House is silenced—and the gentry seem to rejoice much at it, the House being become too insolent” (*Diary*, 8:172-73).
meant, but have indisputable evidence that strong exception was taken. I have mentioned Dryden and Lee’s *The Duke of Guise* (1682), where the targeting of Monmouth cannot sanely be denied. Aphra Behn’s *The Roundheads* (1681), based on John Tatham’s *The Rump* (1660), is another such instance: Roundheads equal Whigs. Less specifically pointed satires were sometimes allowed on stage and sometimes not. Otway’s *Venice Preserv’d* (1682) bashes “plotters” but is hard to tie explicitly into London particulars. Nahum Tate’s touchier *The History of King Richard the Second* was initially banned (December 1680), then performed the next month under the title *The Sicilian Usurper*—with the result that the theatre was shut down for ten days. Tate protested his innocence, but why he thought a play featuring the deposition of an English king would be permitted in the midst of the Exclusion Crisis is hard to figure. One may fairly say that some of the most effective satire is applicative (witness *Absalom and Achitophel*)—if it got by the authorities, and if the reader or viewer duly made the connection.

**VIII. The discontinuous world of Carolean satire**

How closely do the satires with which I have been dealing resemble each other? One could organize works around a particular theme or subject—e.g., satires directed at Monmouth, court lampoons—but the relevant texts would not reflect congruous attitudes toward the target or purposes for writing. How many Carolean writers produce similar kinds of satire? I have tried to show that if we attend to motive, level of commitment, tone, intensity, presentation of positives, hope for change, apparent desired effect, and so on, then we see quite clearly that Dryden is not Buckingham and that Marvell is not Ayloffe.

Scholars have not exactly asserted that Dryden and Buckingham are identical, but most studies of late seventeenth-century satire have emphasized continuity and commonality. As recently as 2007, Griffin could lament that “the canon of Restoration satire remains fairly small,” and that “the range and

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171 For a useful discussion of the censorship of *Richard the Second* and other Exclusion Crisis plays, see Janet Clare, “‘All run now into Politicks’: theatre censorship during the Exclusion Crisis, 1679-81,” in *Writing and Censorship in Britain* (London: Routledge, 1992), 46-56. Clare points out that *Richard the Second* was a problem not because “the political loyalties of the playwright . . . were suspect,” as is often the case, but because of “the subject-matter” (49).
vigor” of satiric practice in this period “are not fully recognized.”172 Range is hard to appreciate if one is seeking cohesion among a small body of works. Selden has claimed, for example, that “the leading satirists of the Restoration period (Butler, Rochester, Oldham and Dryden) all ridicule deviations from a strongly held rational norm in the spheres of philosophy, religion, politics or literature.”173 Literary critics in all realms usually seek to define the spirit of the age, and attempts to characterize this period are no exception, but the whole idea of a “Restoration mode” is methodologically indefensible and acutely unhelpful.174 The features that differentiate texts and authors from each other might be either superficial or fundamental, but if literary history is to have any real utility then we cannot afford to ignore them.

Attempting to identify or enforce uniformity among disparate works written for a wide variety of reasons across a twenty-five-year period is unlikely to yield accurate results. Selden links Butler, Rochester, Oldham, and Dryden—but if we are not looking for kinship, what do we find? Butler defends monarchy entirely on pragmatic grounds, and his most famous work is a burlesque and a camouflaged satire. Rochester is an aggressively skeptical author, whose satires’ moral positions are sometimes open to multiple interpretations. Oldham is a comparatively apolitical anti-Catholic poet whose satires might be expressions of conviction, but which tend to seem more like spectacular performances composed without a positive agenda. Carolean Dryden is a high Anglican, a believer in mystical politics, and Charles II’s poet laureate; his most famous satire is a biblical allegory motivated by alarm and anxiety, written in defense of the status quo and meant to change minds. Butler and Dryden both satirize Shaftesbury as Achitophel and denounce the Whigs as threats to monarchical order, but Dryden would not write even Part III of Hudibras any more than Butler would write Absalom and Achitophel. If we lump these authors together under a generalized heading (they all “ridicule deviations from a strongly held rational norm”) then we obliterate distinctions that we very much need. These four satirists do not a

173 Selden, English Verse Satire, 73.
174 The phrase is Earl Miner’s: The Restoration Mode from Milton to Dryden (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974). In his discussion of “Restoration satire,” Miner claims that it “reaches its apogee in Dryden’s satires from Mac Flecknoe to The Medall, and it has a kind of afterglow—or after-lowering—in his translations of Juvenal and Persius for The Satires published in 1693” (456).
“mode” make—and Buckingham, Marvell, Ayloffe, Bunyan, Ravenscroft, Behn, Otway, and the countless other Carolean satirists differ variously from these writers and from each other.

An obvious point needs to be made: Carolean satirists had not read Dryden’s *Discourse*, Swift’s *Tale of a Tub*, or Pope’s Horatian satires. They did not foresee the happy advent of an “Augustan” mode; they had no inkling whither eighteenth-century satire was tending. The notion that somehow Swift’s and Pope’s origins are to be found in Rochester and Dryden is misguided; the idea that the chaotic multiplicity of Carolean satire somehow evolved into what Pope or Swift practiced is absurd. Later satirists read some of the work of their predecessors, and perhaps even borrowed from or otherwise followed them—but Pope is not an advanced form of Dryden any more than Rochester is an earlier Swift. Carolean satire has been considered as the primitive beginning of what would become a great age of satire; it has been characterized on the basis of a few favorite texts; it has been misrepresented and apologized for. One recent satire scholar, Fredric Bogel, skips this period entirely, bounding directly from Jonson to Swift.

The world that I have been surveying is at once messily heterogeneous and extraordinarily *sui generis*, but satire in these years is distinguishable from satire in the sub-periods covered in the following chapters. Unhelpful and misleading though I find the idea of a “Restoration mode,” the fact is that satires in the reign of Charles II mostly do “go” together. What sets them apart is largely a matter of the particularities of Carolean court culture and politics, and the world of scribal publication. A high percentage of these works are personal, heated, and abusive; most are concerned, directly or indirectly, with political issues, though some address social and/or literary subjects. Exclusively “moral” satires there are few, and not many writers offer moral justification for their work. Bunyan’s overt Christian didacticism makes him something of an oddity. This satire is very closely connected to its contextual circumstances: its meaning mostly does not “transcend” the moment for which it was written. Never again in England would there be so much personal satire; never again would satire contribute to a decisive political choice during a national crisis. No later satirist is “like” John Ayloffe; Andrew Marvell does not come again. Attempts to explain this material by reference to a few unrepresentative exemplars or to post-1700 developments deprives us of an exciting set of responses to a tumultuous historical moment.
Carolean satire comprises many diverse enterprises, but much of it has energy and fierce commitment.

Later seventeenth-century satire is tamer, blander, and exceedingly unlike what we find in the reign of Charles II. The reasons for the difference are now to seek.
Chapter 4

Beyond Carolean: Satire at the End of the Seventeenth Century

Satire at the end of the seventeenth century differs markedly from Carolean satire, and scholars have found singularly little in it to admire. Writers well-known as satirists in their day—the likes of Ned Ward and Sir Samuel Garth—are rarely mentioned in satire studies, and then only briefly and apologetically. Hardly any major authors have been associated with these years, although both Dryden and Defoe were practicing satirists in the 1690s. Dryden’s titanic modern reputation as a satirist comes entirely from two Carolean poems; his substantial post-Carolean satiric output, including the brilliant *Amphitryon* (1690), has been almost totally ignored by students of satire. Defoe’s career began not with *Robinson Crusoe* but with a series of political verse satires in the 1690s; his *True-Born Englishman* (1701) was a big success; and throughout much of his writing life his reputation depended largely on his satire. Although few satire theorists have much to say about plays, some first-rate satiric drama was premiered on the London stage in William’s reign—including hard-hitting social satires by William Congreve, a protégé of the still under-appreciated Thomas Southerne. Many satires were written in these years, and some (like Garth’s *Dispensary*) were much read and often reprinted. Critics routinely cite Dryden’s *Discourse* of 1693 and the accompanying translation of Juvenal and Persius, but for the most part the years between *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681) and *A Tale of a Tub* (1704) are assumed to constitute a black hole in which nothing of import or interest happens.

Socio-political circumstances change in the last decade and a half of the seventeenth century, and the practice of satire changes with them. The works in this period have little in common either with the types dominant in the Carolean period or with the later masterpieces beloved by modern scholars. If we approach this material looking for *Absalom and Achitophel*, the early Swift, or the mature Pope, we can only be disappointed; neither do we find the blistering bawdiness of Rochester or the unrestrained ribaldry of the Carolean court lampoonists. Our distaste for much of what we do find—works by Sir
Richard Blackmore, Robert Gould, and company—should not deter us, however, from trying to make sense of the change that late-century satires illustrate.

I will deal with questions about four general subjects in this chapter. (1) Satiric practice at the end of the century differs significantly from that in the reign of Charles II. What changed? (2) The pre-eminent satirist of the late seventeenth century is Dryden, whose late-life satiric oeuvre gives us a very different sense of him and also of this period. What sort of satirist was he? (3) Late-century satiric poets are not doing what their Carolean predecessors had done. In what directions does verse satire go in these years? (4) Much high-quality satiric drama is produced in the last decade of the century. What is the nature of these plays, and how do they connect (if they do) to the satiric poetry?

I. Altered circumstances

Verse satire at the end of the late seventeenth century is almost totally unlike that produced in the reign of Charles II. Nothing like a Marvell or a Buckingham or a Rochester exists in this period; there is no Gould or Ward or Blackmore in the world described in the previous chapter. The snappy personal lampoons, the acid demolitions of public figures, the nastily obscene court libels, and the mordant satires on the government—the works that give Carolean verse satire its energy and force—are not to be found in the reigns of James and William. Whence the transformation?

One cause of change is obvious: satire is closely bound, in the second half of the seventeenth century, both to the character of the monarch and to the nature of the troubles of his reign. From Charles’s rule to James’s and then William’s, times changed—and so did the type and intensity of political controversy. The decade following the Restoration had been increasingly tense; satire darkened yet further in the 1670s; by the early 1680s the country faced a major crisis. The likes of Butler and Rochester were saying—not in generalized abstractions but in specific topical commentary—that circumstances were terrible and getting worse all the time. The Exclusion Crisis represented a dire political situation: in somber, desperate terms, writers asked whether England should emend its political foundation to deal with a particular problem. Both those who wanted to exclude James from the
succession and those—like Dryden—who asked “What Prudent men a setled Throne woud shake?” could support their positions; on either side there was severe and legitimate anxiety. This was a practical issue, not a hypothetical or theoretical concern. Someone was going to assume the throne, and who and on what basis had to be decided. The satiric contributions to this debate were passionate, sometimes violently so, and they mattered to their authors in utterly serious ways. Satirists in the later eighties and nineties had plenty to complain about, but there was nothing like the same acute division of opinion, nothing like the same sense of urgent uncertainty at a time of acute national crisis.

Many Carolean satires had focused on Charles II, and—to state the obvious—James was not like his brother. However much derogation was heaped upon him as the Duke of York, in his short-lived tenure as monarch he appears to have suffered less scabrous personal abuse than Charles had or William would, but he was scorned as a fool, loathed as a tyrant, and ridiculed as a coward. He was never popular; his popery caused dubiety at best and hostile apprehension at worst; his staunch belief in the royal prerogative and his relentless pursuit of his agendas made him terrifying. Particular issues could be and were disputed in his reign, but he did create relative consensus. The majority of his subjects basically accepted his accession but disliked and distrusted him: “James’s policies succeeded in alienating nearly every segment of the political nation,” Mark Kishlansky explains, and when trouble came “he was deserted on every side.”

William did not match Charles in brazen carelessness or profligacy any more than James had: he was disparaged not for being a “merry Monarch” but for being a foreign bisexual who stole the throne from his father-in-law, rewarded his (foreign) buddies with lucrative positions, and promptly got England bogged in a long, costly, unpopular continental war. Whatever the antagonism toward William, however, his subjects were mostly prepared to accept his authority. What fundamental,
future-altering issues could satirists write about in the reigns of James and William? What concerns would have anything like the urgency of those central to much of Carolean satire?

A transformed political climate produces differences in satire—but other changes are if anything more important. The significant decrease in lampoon production after Charles’s death has less to do with politics, or with an increasingly refined collective sensibility, than with a change in the composition and dissemination of satire. Few literary scholars or satire theorists have been concerned about such matters, and of course modern critical awareness of scribal publication is a very recent development. Harold Love’s groundbreaking study did not appear until 1993, and until then even those who dealt with manuscripts paid little attention to dissemination. The editors of the Yale POAS made much material readily available and provided immensely useful annotation and explication, but they did not distinguish clearly between what was printed and what was not, or explain why or how that distinction might matter. In fact, the dispersal of the court wits in James’s and especially William’s reign—and the concurrent rise of print culture—dramatically alter the possibilities for verse satire in this period.

A great deal of Carolean satiric verse was written by insiders for insiders. The poems were sometimes printed and sometimes attributed, rightly or wrongly—but, as both Love and Hume have emphasized, most of the touchier works circulated scribally and anonymously. Rochester’s wickedly unsparing “scepter lampoon,” Marvell’s fervently critical responses to the Second Dutch War, the anti-monarchical diatribes of Ayloffe, the smear jobs on political powerhouses and the colorful billingsgate directed at court ladies—these were not usually meant for print or for widespread consumption, even if such material was published on occasion. Publication would often have been imprudent, but it was also largely unnecessary: these satirists were writing for coterie audiences who could be reached by manuscript circulation. Hume explains that

London was a city of about four hundred thousand at the time of the plague in 1665 (which killed about a quarter of that population), and the overlapping groups of nobility, gentry, government officials, members of Parliament, and great merchants and their families cannot have constituted more than a small fraction of the whole. We are in the

world of Samuel Pepys’s *Diary*, a place in which those who are part of one network know virtually everyone in it and recognize many in other networks. This was a self-contained little universe that revolved round the court and thrived on gossip. Like Hollywood in its heyday, the court world was conspicuous, scandalous, and inevitably the focus for floods of gossip.4

The importance of in-group mentality to the nature of Carolean satire is difficult to overestimate. Michael McKeon and Hume underscore the potential indecipherability of such materials—circulated without helpful annotation—but I suspect that the (probably fairly specific) target audience often had a pretty good idea of how to interpret the satire.5 This was a small and often extremely closely connected court world.

When that changes, so does satire. James filled his court with Catholics, and by the summer of 1686, John Harold Wilson observes, “Many of the Protestant courtiers who had made the libertine Court of Charles II so brilliantly sinful retired to their country estates.”6 The implication for satiric practice is at least twofold: the reduction in blatant licentiousness gives lampoonists less to talk about, and the surviving Carolean court satirists cease to write court satire. William and Mary’s court is yet more remote from that of Charles—the tone and indeed most of the personnel change. In the 1690s, the government got bigger, the court world got smaller, and, argues Love, “Pure court satire became increasingly rare . . . because the court itself had largely surrendered is cultural supremacy and distinctiveness.”7 The phenomenon is simple: the disintegration of the Carolean court circle means that the scribal satirists largely disappear. Post-1688, few satirists are court wits writing for a small, specific audience with inside knowledge; they are a socially mixed lot writing for print for a wider, more disparate readership. Some poets are commercial drudges keen to make a living off their works, representing a category non-existent in Carolean verse satire, but in any case the diminution of the viability of scribal publication fundamentally alters the type of satire that will work. Readers are not likely to appreciate—

6 Wilson, *Court Satires*, 159.
buy, read, enjoy—satire that does not communicate anything to them. That many Londoners would care about the indecencies of a minor court lady who was not even a name to them is highly unlikely. The audience for satire changed after the death of Charles II, and satirists needed new material.

What could members of a broad and disparate reading public be assumed to know? How was information transmitted to those who might consume satire? In the world of the 1690s, common knowledge was limited. Before the founding of the first daily newspaper—*The Daily Courant* in 1702—the distribution of printed news and gossip was scrappy and minimal. Newsbooks circulated throughout much of the seventeenth century, and coffeehouses provided access of various sorts to some information, but those tended to be expensive and the discussions far from uniform. Satirists writing for print could not safely assume that a broad readership would “get” highly topical references.

The best-known and perhaps the most influential satire of this period worked precisely because it did not depend upon particularity. Thomas Wharton’s anti-Catholic ballad, *Lilli burlero*, was spectacularly popular and had considerable practical effect. Initially written in response to Richard Talbot’s administration in Ireland in 1687, *Lilli burlero* was set to a lively tune by Henry Purcell and circulated in broadside form in October 1688. Wharton himself reportedly bragged that his doggerel—evidently read by all and sundry as James fled England—had “sung a deluded Prince out of Three Kingdoms.” In his *History*, Bishop Burnet would marvel at this squib’s success: the satire “made an impression on the Army that cannot be well imagined by those who saw it not. The whole Army, and at last all people both in city and country, were singing it perpetually. And perhaps never had so slight a

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9 A True Relation Of the several Facts and Circumstances Of the Intended Riot and Tumult on Queen Elizabeth’s Birth-day. Gathered From Authentick Accounts (1711), on Wharton: “This Person, who has so often boasted himself . . . for making a certain *Lilli bullero Song*, with which, if you will believe himself, he sung a deluded Prince out of Three Kingdoms” (5).
thing so great an effect.” Like _Lilli burlero_, other celebrations of William’s campaign, such as _The Plowman_ and Matthew Prior’s _The Orange_, reflected and were evidently meant to bolster popular support of James’s removal. As late as _Tristram Shandy_, whose Uncle Toby famously whistles _Lilli burlero_, the import of Wharton’s satire was clear to English readers—but the song’s notoriety and public impact owed more to its associations than to its actual content.

At the other extreme is Dorset’s _A Faithful Catalogue of Our Most Eminent Ninnies_ (wr. 1688), a highly topical court satire meant not for wide print distribution but for manuscript circulation among a court circle. An oddity in the late eighties, the _Faithful Catalogue_ would have seemed commonplace a decade earlier—and this example illustrates the change I am trying to describe. It represents one of the most “Carolean” of the post-Carolean satires, evidently written exclusively for those among the gentry who would understand the topical allusions (e.g., to court scandals). The lampoon is aggressively insulting, but it is, as Galbraith M. Crump explains, “more than a display of gross abuse. Written sometime early in 1688, it appeared when James still remained awesome enough to dismay all who opposed him. The poem rehearses, with considerable accuracy for its kind, all that by nature would tend to reduce James and his courtiers to the level of buffoons acting out an absurd low comedy.” Dorset is practicing purposive detraction of a sort commoner in the 1670s than later in the century. His attack on James resembles Carolean satirists’ contemptuous derision of Monmouth and others: “Oh, sacred James!

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10 Bishop Burnet’s _History of His Own Time_, vol. 1. _From the Restoration of King Charles II to the Settlement of King William and Queen Mary at the Revolution_ (1724), 792.
12 Crump, _POAS-Y_, 4:190.
may thy dread noddle be / As free from danger as from wit 'tis free.”

The catalogue of offenders sounds familiar to readers of Carolean court satire: the poet sears “Pimp-statesmen, bug’ring priests, court bawds, and whores” (l. 14). The difference between this satire and something like Gould’s anti-feminist diatribes or Ward’s attack on vintners is enormous—and it is also unsurprising, given the difference in mode of circulation and intended audience. The *Faithful Catalogue* is satire written for a small world; it would not work nearly so well as a broadly distributed print satire.

If one was writing for print in the 1690s, what could one do? What kind of satire would work for an increasingly wide audience among whom no very substantial shared knowledge base could be assumed? At least two possibilities exist. (1) A satirist could provide, in the text itself, everything a reader needed, as in the case of very general satires. Or, (2) he or she could address topics sufficiently well-known, as in the case of Gould’s attack on popular actors and actresses, or of Garth’s contribution to the dispensary debate. The generalized verse satire in this period is largely unprecedented in Charles’s reign: Carolean satirists were not taking up their pens against greed or brandy, but such works are everywhere at the end of the century. The many satires on women produced by Gould, Richard Ames, and others probably do not represent only a sudden upsurge in bitter misogyny, but also another means of targeting a sufficiently general group for the satire to have meaning for a broad readership. In section III, I will return to these categories and offer particular illustrations of them. For now, the crucial point is that satires by the likes of Ward, Gould, Garth, and other poets of this period represent different ways of dealing with a set of contextual circumstances unique to the late seventeenth and very early eighteenth centuries. “Our easy lumping together of Carolean and later writing,” Hume insists, “is bad methodology.”

This is absolutely true in the realm of verse satire, which is in this period fragmentary and incoherent, and which has been largely ignored because it lacks the zest, spirited meanness, and political consequence of Carolean exemplars. If satires at the end of the century seem a universe away

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14 Hume, “‘Satire’ in the Reign of Charles II,” 332.
from their earlier counterparts, that is because in many ways they are—a lot had changed, and much of what had given Carolean verse satire its remarkable scurrilility and corrosive viciousness had disappeared. Because of the changing audiences for satire, modes of transmission, and assumed satiric literacy, what happens in satire under James and William could not have happened sooner, and it soon ceased to happen. For a variety of reasons, post-Carolean satire represents another world altogether, a fact well illustrated by the late career of John Dryden. *Mac Flecknoe* aside, Dryden was always a print rather than a scribal writer. Alterations in transmission of satire would simply not have mattered to him—but he was unquestionably drastically influenced, in his work and his life, by regnal changes.

II. Dryden as satirist, 1685-1700

Dryden’s twentieth-century reputation as a satirist rests almost entirely upon two poems and his *Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire*. He is usually seen as a commanding moral and political satirist, delivering his judgment with conviction and trying to make things happen—whether discrediting a literary rival whose principles he rejected or forcefully defending king and country in a time of crisis. Dryden scholars have done excellent work on the individual pieces, but no one has looked systematically at his entire satiric output.\(^{15}\) What kind of satirist was he? We need to remember two things if we are going to answer that question properly: (1) the theory he promulgates in the *Discourse* is almost totally unrelated to his satiric practice, even in verse; and (2) his practice is not uniform at any one phase of his career or over time. In this section, I want to survey Dryden’s satires for the period at issue, and also to think more broadly about how to characterize his long and varied career as a satirist.

Dryden’s Carolean satires, as I argued in the last chapter, cannot be satisfactorily explained as practical illustrations of the high moral theory he would later outline in the *Discourse*. *Marriage A-la-

\(^{15}\) Harold F. Brooks’s *Dryden the Satirist* (Durham, England: The New Century Press, 1989) includes a chapter on “The Satirist before the Satires,” one on “The Satirist after the Satires,” and one on *The Hind and the Panther*—but he devotes most of his substantive analysis to *Mac Flecknoe, Absalom and Achitophel*, and *The Medall*. Brooks has very little to say about any of Dryden’s satires after *Absalom and Achitophel*, concluding that in the late-life satires “we find him in topics and techniques little different from the satirist before the satires” (179).
Mode and The Kind Keeper include social satire, albeit of very different sorts. Mac Flecknoe is often exalted as a statement of Dryden’s deeply-held literary principles, though it is basically an extremely well-crafted lampoon. The Medall slashes at the Whigs in general and Shaftesbury in particular, and it—like Absalom and Achitophel—is a party document, skilled and principled but also ferocious. The Spanish Fryar warns against challenging rightful authority (in the serious plot) and savages an easy target in the crooked friar Dominic (in the sub-plot). The Duke of Guise, written in collaboration with Nat Lee, is a more strictly political satire, this time a straight parallel play implying that the Duke of Monmouth is a traitorous malefactor who ought to be killed. Dryden as Carolean satirist is aggressive, self-assured, and usually politically-minded. He sometimes plays dirty, but he is at his best when he defends a cause in which he deeply believes, and his satires around the Exclusion Crisis are impassioned, clear-cut, and uncompromising.

What sort of satirist is Dryden under James? Obviously he remained Poet Laureate and a favorite of the king; he was loyal to the authorities and a champion of the status quo. His conversion to Catholicism in 1685 allowed him to be James’s poet as much as he had been Charles’s, though it also earned him much abuse from fellow satirists, who heaped scorn upon him as an unscrupulous opportunist and flagrant time-server. “More Libels have been written against me,” he complains in his Discourse, “than almost any Man now living.” Assualts on his character notwithstanding, Dryden was in a good spot under the new king, and his satires from this period evince his relative security. Few satire scholars include Albion and Albanius (1685) and The Hind and the Panther (1687) in their purview, but both of

16 Works, 4:59. Dryden’s conversion attracted a good deal of mostly negative attention. The author of To Mr. Dryden, Upon his Declaring himself a Roman Catholic (wr. 1686) calls the poet a “Jack of all faiths” (l. 79), and in The Town Life (wr. 1686) Dryden is excoriated as a pen-for-hire: “Praise Cromwell, damn him, write the Spanish Friar—/ A Papist now, if next the Turk should reign, / Then piously transverse the Alcoran” (ll. 20-23). Other attacks include To Mr. Bays (wr. 1686), Gould’s The Laureat (1687; 4d*), and Brown’s The Reasons of Mr. Bays Changing his Religion (1688). The most famous satire on Dryden from this period is Prior and Montagu’s The Hind and the Panther Transvers’d, a wickedly funny burlesque of Dryden’s defense of the Catholic church.
these works pass judgment while also providing positive commentary—according to Dryden’s arguments in the Discourse, that is, these pieces count as satirical enterprises.\(^\text{17}\)

*Albion and Albanius* is an allegorical masque recounting the history of the reign of Charles II and commenting on the politics of England from the eve of restoration to the present.\(^\text{18}\) It begins with the city of London (personified in “Augusta”) in chaos. Augusta regrets having been swayed by faction and attracted by zeal, and she recognizes that the restoration of peace and order requires the reinstallation of the rightful king (Charles II as “Albion”). Albion’s return is widely and loudly celebrated, but “Democracy” and “Zelota” (“Feign’d Zeal”) conspire to destroy him and to rule again: Achitophel-like, Zelota vows to “Inspire the Crowd / With Clamours loud / T’involve his Brother and his Wife.”\(^\text{19}\) As in *Absalom and Achitophel*, the sovereign’s mercy only invites sedition, and Albion laments his pity as the rebels threaten to undo him (III.i.15-17). The mutineers (Whigs) cannot carry out their plot, however, and Albion credits divine intervention with his salvation. In the epilogue, Dryden urges loyalty to and faith in the rightful monarch: “His Honour is to Promise, ours to Trust” (55). This is a piece of didactic political commentary and its message is crystal clear: Dryden indicts those who are or would be disloyal to the king as menaces, suggesting that Providence is against them, and he implicitly defends the legitimacy and the future of the Stuart monarchy. An elaborately staged opera, *Albion and Albanius* may seem a strange piece to include in a study of satire, though in basic concept and purpose it is not so very remote from *Absalom and Achitophel*, different as those works are in genre and tone. In *Albion and Albanius*, Dryden is ultimately contrasting good and evil, defending a monarchy he believes in by debunking those who threaten it. He stresses the allegorical nature of the work in the preface, and in the epilogue he calls the opera “our Æsop’s Fable”—naming a type long recognized as a satiric vehicle for social, moral, and political instruction (54; italics reversed).

\[^{17}\] Dryden emphasizes as essential to satire a “principal Instructive Point” (80). He observes approvingly that “amongst the Romans,” satire “was not only us’d for those Discourses which decry’d Vice, or expos’d Folly; but for others also, where Virtue was recommended” (48).

\[^{18}\] *Albion and Albanius* was written 1684 for Charles II, but not performed until June 1685 after his death.

\[^{19}\] *Works*, 15:54 (epilogue) and 33 (II.i.87-89).
The Hind and the Panther (1687) is more clearly and combatively satiric: Dryden calls the piece a “Satyr” in his address “To the Reader,” and contemporaries branded “Bayes” a “Satyrist” for this performance. Dryden ridicules the various groups of dissenters in turn—e.g., the “bloudy Bear” (Independent), “the Quaking Hare” (Quaker), the “bristl’d Baptist Boar”—but the Anglicans are his primary targets, and toward them he is defensively antagonistic. In the theological debate between the spotless Catholic Hind and the beautiful but dangerous Anglican Panther (Part II), Dryden attacks the church that he had upheld in Religio Laici (1682). In Part III, he goes after individual Anglicans, especially Edward Stillingfleet and Gilbert Burnet, the latter caricatured as a “Brawny” Buzzard. Whatever the poem’s celebration of Catholicism and denigration of the Anglican Church, it is not for the Catholic king what Absalom and Achitophel had been for his brother. As James Anderson Winn points out, Dryden had initially “designed the poem in part as an argument to persuade the Established Church to agree to a cancellation of the Test Act,” but in issuing a Declaration of Indulgence “James made a bid to ally Catholics and Dissenters against the Establishment”—an alliance Dryden is absolutely not seeking to forge in this poem. His mockery of the dissenters suggests, says David Bywaters, that he is more interested in aggression than in persuasion. Whatever the propagandistic value of a pro-Catholic piece published two months after the Catholic king’s Declaration of Indulgence, Dryden is not merely writing to serve James’s cause.

He is, however, sniping at the Anglicans and attempting to make an argument in favor of his religio-political allegiances. The Hind and the Panther is as personal as it is broadly political, and it is a

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20 For Dryden’s quotation, see Works, 3:119. An anonymous commentator describes the author of The Hind and the Panther as a “Satyrist” and complains about “the most noxious pieces of his Satyr”; Notes upon Mr. Dryden’s Poems in Four Letters. By M. Clifford . . . to which are annexed some Reflections upon the Hind and Panther. By another Hand (1687), 29, 34. In The Hind and the Panther Transvers’d (1687), Prior and Montagu also highlight the satiric nature of the poem (both in the preface and again at p. 14).

21 Works, 3:124 (ll. 35, 35, 43). David Bywaters argues that “Dryden seeks not to persuade his audience but to display before it the wisdom and integrity, in the midst of political upheaval, of his beliefs and career; to reprove the political nation for its misdeeds and to suggest their probable consequences.” See Dryden in Revolutionary England (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 35.

22 Winn, John Dryden and His World, 423.

23 Bywaters, Dryden in Revolutionary England, 20-21. As Winn observes, The Hind and the Panther also includes criticism of the king’s advisors and his “increasingly aggressive” policies (John Dryden and His World, 421).
strongly positive satire. Neither it nor *Albion and Albanius* has the urgent intensity of *Absalom and Achitophel*, but that is hardly astonishing. The earlier poem was written in defense of a monarch and an institution that was in crisis. In 1685, James’s crown was basically safe: Monmouth’s rebellion in July had been effectively suppressed without more widespread mutiny, and the Anglican hierarchy had supported the king. James could have ruled until his death had he ruled with more prudence and restraint. *Albion and Albanius* at least implicitly discourages would-be malcontents from making trouble—it does no more than that, and did not need to do more than that. *The Hind and the Panther* is not remote from contemporary policy issues (especially Indulgence), but it is not a defense of a beleaguered monarch or an attempt to influence the outcome of a current crisis. Writing satire in the reign of James, Dryden is secure and judgmental. He is not as fiery as he had been in Charles’s reign, in part because of external circumstances and in part because his interests and concerns had shifted.

Dryden’s satire in the reign of William is so far removed from his earlier work that it might have been written by a different man. And to some extent it was: gone is the imposing Poet Laureate and self-assured believer in the status quo. Dryden in Williamite England is embittered and financially stressed; he is a Catholic in a violently (and, as of 1689, officially) anti-Catholic country. He can no longer afford to execrate his enemies in unconcealed invectives—his enemies are now in power. Dryden scholars have convincingly demonstrated the presence of veiled anti-William, even Jacobite, sentiment in his late works: he recognized, observes Kirk Combe, that “Frank, laureate declarations . . . were no longer his prerogative.” If we measure *King Arthur* by the standards of *Absalom and Achitophel*, then we miss the mark by a very great distance. Dryden’s position changed in 1688, and so—necessarily—did his motives.

24 The government had little sense of humor in the realm of anti-Williamite satire. Brown and Tutchin were both arrested for their verses (Brown’s *Satyr upon the French King* and Tutchin’s *The Foreigners*, both discussed below). Ralph Gray was placed in the pillory for *The Coronation Ballad* (1689), a nasty satire on William, described in the ballad’s refrain as “A dainty fine King indeed.” Gray encourages the rabble to “make room for the clown,” assails the new monarch’s sexuality, and—most problematically—forbids his downfall: “Descended he is from an Orange tree, / But if I can read his destiny, / He’ll once more descend from another tree” (ll. 75, 5-7).

and methods as a satirist. His tone darkens, and his ability to be direct without fear of reprisal diminishes significantly. Perhaps more important, he no longer hopes for a practical impact or anticipates any positive change.

Several of Dryden’s post-Revolution works include quasi-covert satire, though the type and degree of indirectness and ambiguity varies. *Eleonora* (1692; 6d*) has been taken as an indictment of Williamite England, but the vehicle for Dryden’s complaint about a fallen world is a richly poetic elegy praising the humility and piety of the recently deceased Countess of Abingdon. His commendation of the Countess, Winn suggests, is “the satire that he dares not write.”

*Cleomenes* (1692) indisputably expresses sympathy for James II: an exiled king plots from afar to reclaim his throne, but his attempted revolution fails, making the piece a tragedy. Queen Mary initially forbade the staging of *Cleomenes* but relented within a week. In the preface to the printed version, which takes its epigraph from Juvenal, Dryden disingenuously denies the play’s political application: “I dare assure you, that here is no Parallel to be found: 'Tis neither Compliment, nor Satyr; but a plain Story.” The political message must have been clear to theatre-goers, and welcome to some of them, but Dryden did not make it explicit. His 1693 translations include much anti-Williamite satire; his modernization of the original works and his added details made contemporary application undeniable.

*Alexander’s Feast* (1697), the translation of Virgil’s *Aeneid* (1697), and *Fables Ancient and Modern* (1700) have likewise been read for their surreptitious Jacobite sentiments. In the reign of William, Dryden writes a number of works that are—sometimes

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27 *Works*, 16:79.
28 These poems, argues Combe, “contain the surreptitious and personal equivalents of Dryden’s once bold and public method of political satire” (“Clandestine Protest,” 36). Combe points out that, although Dryden keeps the spirit of his Roman forebears, “discreet modernizations” are still found in these translations—and, especially in the third satire, these modernizations are “carefully directed at a preselected audience” (39).
definitely, sometimes arguably or plausibly—satiric, but he is no position to issue thundering
denunciations.

Much of Dryden’s Williamite satire depends upon the perception of the audience: he wishes not
to offend the authorities, but he does want to communicate a negative point of view to that part of the
audience whose assumptions allow them to identify/comprehend it. In the Fables, for example, his satire
really only reaches those who sufficiently share his outlook to understand what he does not make explicit.
The late-life Dryden shares something with Defoe in the realm of satiric practice: neither writes in order
to change minds or to persuade opponents to see reason, but instead they design their arguments primarily
for like-minded readers or viewers. Dryden adds cover and/or lightens the tone to prevent the rest of his
audience from being alienated or hostile. The point is elementary but needs to be made: Dryden cannot
afford to scorch William and William’s England directly, and nothing would be gained if he did. Those
whom he wants to perceive his concealed satire will presumably perceive it, and those whom he wants to
miss it will miss it, or will at least be unable to prove it. The results do not have the zing of satire
written—like Absalom and Achitophel—from a position of authority, but they are no less deliberately
crafted and can be remarkably forceful.

Amphitryon (1690) is a great play and a tremendous satire with brutally clear implications about
the abuse of power. The basic plotline is as follows: Zeus (an imperious tyrant) assumes Amphitryon’s
shape in order to bed his wife; when the deceit is revealed to the victims, the omnipotent adulterer’s
response is essentially, “What are you going to do about it?” The finale resolves nothing. Amphitryon is
outraged, his wife has been vilely abused, and whether they will stay together or separate is uncertain.
Whatever the seriousness of the plot, Amphitryon has comic gusto. Mercury inquires of Zeus, preparing
for another intrigue, “whether you wou’d recreate your self in Feathers, or in Leather?” (I.i.78-79). The
combination of mordant political commentary and racy farce is peculiar but effective—the play is darkly
cynical and its author disillusioned, but the sexual humor and the slapstick make it, in Winn’s phrasing,
“one of Dryden’s funniest comedies.”

Dryden does not force-feed his audience scathing political satire: Zeus’s victims are not as sympathetic as they could have been, the supernatural plot and remote setting work against topical application, and the tone is so lively that those resistant to the play’s harsh message could ignore it.

_Amphitryon_ is undoubtedly satirical, but would audience members have applied its argument to a specific person or situation—namely, to William and Williamite England? The identification of William with Jupiter (wanton monarchical playboy) seems like a stretch; the fit with Charles II is closer but highly implausible coming from Dryden. I would argue that the satire makes a very general statement about power and justice: Dryden does not represent the current king on the stage, but rather seems interested in inculcating a specific viewpoint in those members of his audience who can be receptive to it. The point, in other words, is not that viewers see the play and think of William, but that perhaps some of them will remember the play—and the ideological position it suggests—when they think of William, and will judge accordingly. This kind of satire is a universe apart from _Mac Flecknoe_, and it also differs considerably from _Cleomenes_, which is indirect but clearly targets real historical particulars. _Amphitryon_ represents more ideological satire: Dryden is trying to instill certain patterns of thought.

Dryden’s and Henry Purcell’s _King Arthur_ (1691) is a yet more problematical case. Given Dryden’s acute disgruntlement in the 1690s, scholars have been inclined to see this work as another expression of hostility toward William—and the work can, after a fashion, be read that way. But we have no evidence that contemporaries understood _King Arthur_ as emphatically anti-Williamite, and some

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30 Winn, _John Dryden and His World_, 446.
31 Milhous and Hume point this out in _Producible Interpretation_, 226. My discussion of the play owes much to theirs.
32 The play’s political message has been much discussed. See Bywaters, _Dryden in Revolutionary England_, chap. 2; Candy B. K. Schille, “Self-Assessment in Dryden’s _Amphitryon_,” _Studies in English Literature_ 36 (1996): 545-60; David Gelineau, “Identity in Dryden’s _Amphitryon_: Cuckolds of Order,” _Studies in English Literature_ 38 (1998): 427-45. Derek Hughes finds in the play broad applicability to historical circumstances: “Unsurprisingly, Dryden did not join Shadwell and Durfey in portraying the Revolution as a re-establishment of law. Law does not restrain power: it serves it” ( _English Drama 1660-1700_, 342).
33 Says Brean S. Hammond: “Promiscuity was not a significant factor in the homosexually inclined William’s make-up and it would have been difficult for an audience to identify him with Jupiter.” See _Professional Imaginative Writing in England, 1670-1740: ‘Hackney for Bread’_ (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 122.
modern critics have promulgated reverse readings, arguing that Oswald (the invader) represents Charles/James, or that the identification shifts from Charles to James to William over the course of the opera. As Hume points out, the text itself does not sustain either allegorical reading. In all likelihood, Dryden deliberately crafted an ambiguous piece. The nationalism of the play would have pleased devoted Whigs and Williamites, but for disaffected Jacobites “the story must have rung hollow, and there are a variety of sour ironies to be found along the way.” Oppositional audience members might have perceived a welcome attack on the new monarch, and Dryden might have wanted them to do so—but that reading is not explicit in the text. The allegory of Absalom and Achitophel had invited a particular interpretation; King Arthur does not communicate a clear-cut authorial point of view.

Dryden’s satiric practices in the last decade of his life differ markedly from what he did in the reign of Charles—and his Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire has precious little to do with any of it. In the Discourse, printed with his translations of Juvenal and Persius, Dryden attempts to make what has become in England a rather scummy, disreputable form of writing into a creditable artistic mode. Following Casaubon, Dacier and others, he defines satire in terms of a respectable classical tradition, emphasizing moral purpose and artistic refinement and insisting that good satire presents positives as well as negatives, virtue as well as vice. He renounces the lampoon as “a dangerous sort of Weapon, and for the most part Unlawful”: the satirist should not damage a man’s reputation, unless that man is “a Publick Nuisance” (59, 60). The Discourse is not an attempt to codify past and present practices, and neither do Dryden’s contemporaries produce works meant to match his theory. Dryden projects an idealized concept—as Dustin Griffin says, “not so much what satire was and had been as what Dryden and his followers wanted it to be.” The Discourse was designed to illumine Roman formal

\[\text{\textsuperscript{34}}\text{For this reading, see Curtis Alexander Price, } Henry Purcell and the London Stage (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), especially pp. 290-95.\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{35}}\text{Hume, “The politics of opera in late seventeenth-century London,” Cambridge Opera Journal 10 (1998): 15-43, at 41. Winn likewise highlights Dryden’s prudent rhetorical strategy, rightly contending that his “skill in recasting the opera to make it open to either a Williamite or a Jacobite reading has a beauty all its own” (John Dryden and His World, 449).}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{36}}\text{Griffin, Satire, 21.}\]
verse satire, so its irrelevance to what Dryden does in drama is not surprising. But even *Mac Flecknoe* and *Absalom and Achitophel*—or the more explicitly positive *Albion and Albanius*—are far from being practical illustrations of his satiric theory.

The *Discourse* does not supply a theoretical formula for the satire that Dryden felt compelled to practice in his late life, but the essay is not merely an abstract statement of theory. The commendation of Juvenal has pronounced satiric edge. Comparing Juvenal to Persius and the “Mild” Horace, Dryden concludes that

*Juvenal* was as proper for his Times, as they for theirs. His was an Age that deserv’d a more severe Chastisement. Vices were more gross and open, more flagitious, more encourag’d by the Example of a Tyrant; and more protected by his Authority. Therefore, wheresover *Juvenal* mentions *Nero*, he means *Domitian*, whom he dares not attack in his own Person, but Scourges him by Proxy. (69)

Dryden does not mention William, but he identifies himself with Juvenal and so makes manifest his judgment of the usurper now on the throne. If the grander precepts loudly trumpeted in the *Discourse* do not explain Dryden’s practices, the praise of Juvenal supplies a not-very-subtle signal that he is perfectly aware of the possibilities for indirect satire. Author of *Amphitryon* and the *Fables*, translator of Juvenal, the Dryden of the 1690s knows how (and why) to scourge the king by proxy.

Dryden’s satiric output changes with his circumstances. As a Carolean satirist, he delivered judgments; he made a case, often for a very specific audience; the authorial position was readily discernible. The satires belonging to the reign of James are likewise straightforward, if less vehement. In his post-Revolution satires, he is more obviously alert to multiple audiences (in particular, those of his own mind and Williamites) and more evasive. Winn says of late-life Dryden that his “cause was indeed lost, but he was willing to be a ‘patient Sufferer,’ supporting himself by his pen, and he did not regard the occasional political jibes in his plays and prologues as threatening any real disturbance to the government.”

37 In the satires for which he is most famous, Dryden assumed that his argument would carry weight. Here, he has no hope of real influence—and that, in satire, changes everything. The

Dryden discussed by satire scholars is the “pen for a party,” a propagandist, an activist, a self-assured theorist and practitioner of satire. The author of Absalom and Achitophel and The Duke of Guise had an agenda, and his political satires are largely defined by what they are defending. But what is Amphitryon written for? What imaginable practical effect could Eleonora have? Sean Walsh has suggested that Dryden’s post-Revolution works be read as “anti-Williamite” rather than as “pro-Jacobite,” and while these satires undoubtedly have positives as well as negatives, they do not appear to have been written with a centrally positive purpose in mind.

Dryden’s late-life satires depend almost completely upon application by readers, and this bespeaks a radically different satiric purpose from anything he wrote in Charles’s or James’s reign. His satiric argument in Amphitryon and the Fables is sufficiently guarded that his opponents do not have to be offended; and the implications for contemporary politics are clear enough that people inclined to agree with him can discern the critical commentary. What that means, in satiric terms, is that Dryden has no practical object for writing. In the reign of Charles II, he had ardently defended the status quo, taking up his pen against change; during James’s tenure, he had advocated discreet amendments in line with the monarch’s preferences and sympathies; under William, he is out of favor and grumbling, directing his complaints not at those whom he hopes to influence but at those who share his unhappiness. Post-Revolution Dryden is sour on William and war, a disaffected Catholic needing to make a living off his writing without pledging loyalty to a king whose accession he perceived as usurpation. No pen for his party, he is essentially powerless—a satirist without a viable cause.

What kind of satirist was Dryden? The question is not answerable in a single set of terms. At no point in his career is his output uniform, and the ringing tones of his Carolean satires are not matched in James’s reign and would have been inappropriate and dangerous in William’s. The Dryden who emerges

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39 Dryden could almost certainly count on readers so inclined to make the application he invites. See John M. Wallace, “Dryden and History: A Problem in Allegorical Reading” and “‘Examples Are Best Precepts’: Readers and Meanings in Seventeenth-Century Poetry.”
from modern satire studies is the author of two poems and a hard-going piece of criticism; in reality he is a much more interesting and exciting satirist whose works are not closely related manifestations of a coherent theory. In satiric terms, how much does *The Kind Keeper* have in common with *Amphitryon*? What connects *Alexander’s Feast* with *Mac Flecknoe*? Dryden is capable of smut and viciousness and heartfelt defense; he is often powerfully assertive (*Absalom and Achitophel*), occasionally wryly resigned to a reality he cannot change (*Marriage A-la-Mode*), sometimes grumpy (his *Juvenal*). He produced quite a lot of satire after 1688, when he could no longer issue strident denunciations or write in the hopes of effecting change—and the late-life output should compel a reconsideration of his satiric aims and practices.

Dryden has often been touted as the dignified forebear of moralizing “Augustan” satire, and critic after critic has looked to him for evidence in support of high-minded claims about satire’s reformatory potential and socio-ethical utility. Taking *Absalom and Achitophel* and the *Discourse* alone, one can perhaps (with some coercive reading) conclude that Dryden was a straitlaced satiric moralizer; looking at his entire satiric oeuvre yields a much different picture. The notion that he was a satirist of lofty moral aims strikes me as outrageous, and I doubt that he actually conceived of himself in that way or that his contemporaries did. Dryden was a master craftsman of enormous literary talent and ambition, and he was a celebrity—but his concerns were often grittily political and circumstantial; he played dirty when he was so inclined; he took the hard line when he could afford to do so; and he limited himself to grousing, painfully aware of his own ineffectuality, when he was no longer a government man. *Absalom and Achitophel* is an astoundingly skillful verse satire, and *The Duke of Guise* and *Amphitryon* are exceptional plays, but the totality of his satiric output suggests that the grandiose characterization of Dryden as hallowed father of a respectable “Augustan” mode is groundless.

III. Poetic satire

Accounts of eighteenth-century satiric poetry often jump from *Mac Flecknoe* and *Absalom and Achitophel* to *The Rape of the Lock* or *The Dunciad*, effectively skipping the decades in between. What
sort of verse satire do we find in late seventeenth century? My objective here is in part to map a territory that has never hitherto been mapped, but we need also to understand these works as responses to the changing world described in section I. Modern satire scholars dismiss this material in toto, regarding the likes of Defoe, Tutchin, Ward, Brown, Garth, Blackmore, and Gould as minor league hack poets. And so they mostly are: Ward is an often clumsy versifier, Gould has no restraint whatever, and Blackmore is something of a blowhard, but qualitative evaluation is not the point. What is at issue is characterizing the natures of their enterprises.

What we find in post-Carolean satiric verse is varied experimentation, necessitated by changes in target audience and print culture. Not all of the experimentation is successful, but it does reflect different authors’ attempts to reach a broadening readership. No tidy sub-generic divisions are to be found, and I see no object in pretending otherwise. The organization that I have adopted reflects my conviction that what is most important and interesting about this material is its shift away from Carolean norms. I therefore begin with types of verse satire that seem to carry over in some way from the reign of Charles II—in particular, political and defamatory satire. I then survey kinds of writing that are drastically unlike anything in the 1660s and 1670s, including works by Garth and Blackmore, as well as satires definitely intended for print, often with commercial motives, and aimed at a general audience.

*Tutchin, Defoe, and political satire*

As in the reign of Charles II, scores of satires address political events, monarchs and advisors, and the state of the country. Unlike Carolean political satire, however, much of the verse produced in this period is—for reasons I have already discussed—relatively small scale. Not all but many satirists in the 1670s and early 1680s addressed Order and Monarchy, imagined and feared major changes, and worried about social and political instability. In the late seventeenth century, political satire is much more contained by the particular circumstance and much less burningly important, reflective of the political realities of the day. We do not find many arguments on the level of what Dryden offers in *Absalom and Achitophel*, and neither do we find much in the way of Ayloffe’s angry intensities or Butler’s broad admonitions. What
do we find? Attempts to categorize a massive and messy body of material are necessarily imperfect, but for convenience I have divided the works into three categories according to apparent satiric purpose: (1) triumphalism; (2) complaint; and (3) defense.

(1) **Triumphalism.** Pointless triumphalism in Carolean satire was atypical but not unheard of—see the exultant Tory satires following Shaftesbury’s departure from London. Exultant derogation is not at all common under William, but some exemplars can be found in James’s short reign. The conviction of Titus Oates for perjury in May 1685 inspired celebratory pieces like *The Salamanca Doctor’s Farewel* and *The Tragick-Comedy of Titus Oates*, playful works penned by writers delighted to see Oates—*persona non grata* but not a real threat—get his comeuppance. A less lively but equally aimless set of poems appeared after Monmouth’s defeat at Sedgemoor: *The Western Rebel*, *Monmouth Degraded*, and Prior’s *Advice to the Painter*. *On the happy defeat of the Rebels in the West* are surely meant to rubbish the vanquished insurgents. They could imaginably have been intended also to bolster James’s regime, but the extent to which he needed such reinforcement in the late summer of 1685 seems limited. Some of the satires following the king’s flight three years later are likewise gleeful but likelier to have more significant implications. *The Scamperers*, Henry Mildmay’s (?) *The Progress*, and *A Hue and Cry* mock the recently fled monarch, the first giddily observing that “the coming of Orange has quite spoil’d the jest” (l. 27). To celebrate the “abdication” is *de facto* to acquiesce in the new regime, but for the most part satiric triumphalism is the stuff of pointless revelry.

(2) **Complaint.** Political satire is often simply complaint, with no more practical purpose than triumphalism. While some such works were imaginably intended to reinforce or challenge the legitimacy of the current regime, most seem merely to vent authorial unhappiness or record grievances. The author of *The Humble Address* (wr. 1685) takes a gloomy view of James’s accession, grimly foretelling that the English will “become slaves to the French” (l. 9); his tone reflects not hostility as much as glum

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40 The author of *Mall in her Majesty* (wr. 1689) accuses the ex-queen of popery and absolutism (and includes a gratuitous swipe at James, who “beshit himself by flight” [l. 71]) and *The Address* (also wr. 1689) has James begging help from Louis. Both poems satirize the Catholic monarchy, albeit in markedly different ways—but they also at least implicitly support and reinforce the new regime.
resignation to the way things are and are going to be. The Revolution did not quiet querulous satirists—writers found much to complain about in William’s reign. Those who ultimately approved of William’s takeover were not necessarily upbeat about the new king’s preferment policies, his push for a comprehensive Church of England, his foreign underlings, or his entangling England in a long and costly war in aid of the much-reviled Dutch. *A Pindarick Ode, in the Praise of Folly and Knavery* (1696; 6d), written by the violently anti-Stuart John Tutchin, voices real personal acrimony. Having been dismissed from a minor government post, Tutchin inveighs against a corrupt society in which the loyal are punished. To find preferment, he asserts, a man “must be much a Fool, or much a Knave” (13). Tutchin is especially sour, but many supporters of the Revolution objected to particular episodes in William’s reign. When the king went to Ireland in 1690, for example, he left Mary and nine counselors to govern England; the prompt embarrassment of the navy at the battle off Beachy Head shook national pride and roused much antagonism toward the regency. The acting administration is excoriated in Mulgrave’s (?) *The Nine*, the Earl of Monmouth’s *The Female Nine*, and the anonymous *Reflections on the Council of Nine*. Like Tutchin, these satirists are unhappy and frustrated, but they are not trying to agitate against the monarch (whose reign they ultimately support) or really to challenge the status quo.

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41 *A Stanza Put on Westminster Hall Gate* and *To the Respective Judges* respond to the trial of Godden v. Hales (June 1686), which granted legal sanction to James’s dispensing power (his right to exempt individual Catholics from the Test Act). As Crump points out, the trial produced surprisingly few satires—reflecting, he suggests, “either the populace’s tendency to wait and see, secure in the knowledge that the succession was Protestant, or its fear of the power James had secured to himself during the first year of his reign” (*POAS-Y*, 4:93). In this case, both the extant responses and the relative dearth of same suggest a sense that satire could have no practical effect on a troubling course of events.

42 Spiro Peterson explains the circumstances of Tutchin’s dismissal from his post in the Victualling Office (“he failed to establish his case that the commissioners mismanaged public funds”) in his introduction to the Augustan Reprint Society facsimile of Tutchin’s *Selected Poems* (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1964), vi.

43 In *The Mouse Grown a Rat* (1702), Tutchin—a participant in Monmouth’s rebellion, a champion of the Revolution, and a fierce opponent of Jacobitism—lamented that he had been “ruined for his country in James’ reign, starved for his country in William’s reign, and liable to be hanged for his country in the next reign” (Frank H. Ellis, *POAS-Y*, 6:225). Peterson likens Tutchin to Oldham (*Selected Poems*, iii), but the two Protestant patriots produce very different kinds of satire: Tutchin writes with manifest conviction inspired by personal enmity, and resembles more closely Oldham’s lesser-known contemporary, that vituperative anti-Stuart, anti-Catholic, republican satirist, John Ayloffe.
More thoroughly anti-Williamite and Jacobite satires are legion, but few reflect hope or even real desire for another Stuart restoration. The early Jacobite works, as William J. Cameron rightly observes, are trenchant but glum: “The hatred and venom expressed could only result from a successful revolution, for seldom does one find the lofty tones of superiority and ironic detachment associated with the satire of Dryden or other establishment poets of an earlier decade.” These pieces, like Arthur Maynwaring’s Tarquin and Tullia (wr. 1689) and The Reflection (wr. 1689), “leave the reader with the unmistakable impression that the author is writing for a lost cause.” The author of Advice to a Painter (wr. 1697) is darkly pessimistic in his response to the Treaty of Ryswick, the end of the war, and William’s homecoming. He assumes the impossibility of positive change: in the final lines, he encourages the painter to leave some “vacant Room” on the canvas “For Knaves in Embrio, and Rogues to come; / Who undiscover’d, yet will us betray, / And sell their Country in a closer way” (ll. 143-46). Satirists for William, against William, and for James articulate much unhappiness—varying in kind and intensity—but are often reacting negatively to something already determined, splenetically bemoaning that which cannot be changed.

(3) Defense. In the reigns of James and especially William, a number of satirists comment on issues of policy, apparently hoping for a desired present-day outcome, not griping or generalizing or retrospectively bashing an enemy. Many of the satiric responses to policy under James and William, moreover, are as defensive as they are offensive. The possibility of satiric “defense” has not been much considered, as scholars tend to understand satire largely as an instrument of aggression and attack; Absalom and Achitophel is the only defensive satire which gets much attention from modern critics. But one of the best-known political satirists in the reign of William—Defoe—often writes defensive satire. No less than the poet of Absalom and Achitophel, the author of The True-Born Englishman takes his subject seriously in both political and personal terms. Williamite propaganda does not excite scholars as

45 An equally venomous (and equally resigned) anti-William poem is Anno 1696, a short but venomous diatribe on William, under whose “tyranny” England has suffered “a lasting war,” and who “never yet didst one kind thing” for his people. The manuscript is British Library Stowe 305, fols. 213v-214r.
much as Dryden’s sober vindication of Charles, but Defoe’s poem also represents a strongly defensive type of satiric enterprise.

Many of the political satires in James’s and William’s reigns were evidently written as much for as against a cause. *The Man of Honor* (wr. 1687; pub. 1689) extols those who, uncompelled by “the threats or favors of a crown” (l. 1), refused to convert to serve James; the satirist (Charles Montagu?) devotes most of his poem to praise, explicitly negative only at the end. The trial of the seven bishops (1688)—one of the great mistakes of James’s reign—produced a variety of kinds of satire. *The Dissenters’ Thanksgiving for the Late Declaration* is an occasional poem written without a clear-cut authorial position, and *The Clerical Cabal* and *The Sentiments* are both sharply anti-clerical (the first ironic, the second direct). Other satiric responses are much more positive. *A New Catch in Praise of the Reverend Bishops* loudly sings the bishops’ praises, and *The Church of England’s Glory* blasts them for sedition and champions James.

The Church of England and ecclesiastical policy loom large in the political satire of William’s reign. Attacks on the nonjurors are also defenses of the new monarch, as in Marvell’s *Ghost* (wr. 1691), whose author deprecates the non-swearers (“men of God” who “do the Devil’s work” [l. 1]) for defying the king and weakening the country. William’s push for religious comprehension produced a flurry of satiric responses. Maynwaring’s (?) *Suum Cuique* (wr. 1689) defends the high Anglican position, contesting the proposed liturgy reform that would reconcile moderate dissenters to the Church, and the author of *Vox Clero, Lilli burlero* (wr. 1689) advocates comprehension. William and Mary’s policies of ecclesiastical preferment—nonjurors were stripped of their positions and replaced by oath-takers—were hotly objected to. On the Promoted Bishops* (wr. 1691) denounces this patronage system and the elevated clergy; so do *The Divorce* and *A Litany for the Monthly Fast* (both wr. 1692), which also at least implicitly defend the nonjurors and the system disrupted by the new regime. Many satires of the decade are passionately anti-clerical, including Tutchin’s *The Tribe of Levi* (1691; 2d*), but the clergy had their

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partisans. One response to Tutchin, the anonymous *Rabshakeh Vapulans* (1691; 6d*), is as defensive of priests as it is antagonistic toward Tutchin and other satirists. Luttrell’s gloss emphasizes this satire’s positive agenda: “A poem in vindicacon of ye Clergy.” Writers and readers of political verse clearly understood “defense” as a legitimate and worthwhile motive for satire.

Defoe’s early verse satires are written against William’s enemies and in staunch support of England’s Protestant savior. In *A New Discovery of an Old Intreague: A Satyr* (1691), he lampoons a group of Jacobite petitioners creating unrest under the hero-king and recalls the nightmare of absolutism under James II (“Antichrist”), when England had become a “Protestant Body with a Popish Head” (ll. 157, 155). Throughout Defoe’s writing life, he suggests that Catholicism is political and theological perversion; in the first decade of his satiric career, he frequently claims that England has been delivered from the Catholic threat by William. In *The Mock Mourners* (1702; nine editions in that year; 6d*), he has at the English ingrates who rejoice in the king’s death (and indeed the satirical “elegies” for William were impressively venomous). Defoe’s poem was written, says Luttrell, “in great Commendation” of the late sovereign. But his most celebrated verse satire, *The True-Born Englishman*, had appeared while the king still reigned, and its example illustrates a fundamental change between Carolean and Williamite satire.

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49 In *The Mourners* (1702), for example, Bevil Higgons (?) urges the king’s subjects not to grieve for him but to weep for their own condition: “Mourn for ten Years of War and dismal Weather / For Taxes, strung like Necklaces together” (ll. 11-12). He grumbles that the country would be in better shape “Had Sorrel stumbled thirteen Years ago” (l. 18), and the author of *Upon Sorrel* (1702) issues a full-blown panegyric on the “Illustrious Steed” from which William had been thrown (l. 1). Bernard Mandeville responds to William’s opponents—somewhat after the fashion of Defoe—in *The Pamphleteers: A Satyr* (1703), another instance of strongly positive satire, defending the memory of the late king against his detractors.

50 *The Luttrell File*, 42.
The True-Born Englishman is a direct response to Tutchin’s The Foreigners (1700). Because of this pair of poems, Tutchin and Defoe are sometimes associated with each other, but, similarities in subject matter notwithstanding, they have very different concepts of satire. Tutchin’s satires are essentially complaints, vitriolic expressions of disapproval and disgruntlement; he almost always writes against, Defoe almost always for, the cause at issue. The Foreigners could imaginably have had a practical purpose—unlike the strictly grumpy A Pindarick Ode and The British Muse: or Tyranny Expos’d. A Satyr (1702)—but it does not have anything like the positive thrust evident in Defoe’s most famous poem. The Foreigners was clearly inspired by xenophobia, but Tutchin is perhaps also looking to rally public opinion yet more intensely against foreign-born men in power. He does not impugn William, instead blaming Israel’s (i.e., England’s) problems on “crafty Knaves at home” (that is, the Whig junto) and “a Foreign Brood” (ll. 48, 49). Whatever Tutchin’s intentions, the government was not amused; he was promptly arrested for libel, though his strategy of covert naming—Bentir for Bentick—prevented his prosecution.

Defoe likewise perceived in The Foreigners an attack not only on the Dutch but on the king himself. His response is a thoroughgoing defense of William, hailed as the savior of England and of the Protestant way of life. William is also the heaven-sent alternative to James, who in being forced off the throne was “punish’d only, not betray’d” (l. 768). Defoe argues that the notion of a “true-born Englishman” is fantasy. He accuses the malcontents of ingratitude toward their Protestant hero-king and toward Providence, whence salvation had come, and so indicts them as “Rebels to God, and to Good Nature too” (l. 960). Like Absalom and Achitophel, The True-Born Englishman is a defense of the current monarchy and a satire on the king’s enemies. Dryden and Defoe are both championing their

51 John Dennis (?) also responded harshly to Tutchin; his The Reverse: Or, The Tables Turne’d (1700; 4d*) is a point-by-point counterattack; the anonymous The Natives: An Answer to The Foreigners (1700) responds line by line, and is, observed one contemporary, “horrid dull stuff” (quoted in POAS-Y, 6:227).
52 Ellis, POAS-Y, 6:225.
53 Other satiric defenses of William include Charles Blount’s (?) A Dialogue between King William and the Late King James (wr. 1690; pub. 1695), A Scourge for the Jacobites: A Satyr (1692), and Montagu’s (?) The True and Genuine Explanation Of one K. James’s Declaration (1693).
sovereign and sniping at his attackers. But the results are different, and that disparity cannot be adequately explained as a matter of poetic talent. The striking discrepancy between *Absalom and Achitophel* and *The True-Born Englishman* has to do with the position of the authors—Dryden is a loyal “insider” and Defoe a dissenting “outsider”—but also with a shift in the nature of political satire from Carolean England to the late-century. That Dryden is an abler poet than Defoe is not in question, though Defoe has his moments. Perhaps he could not have written anything like *Absalom and Achitophel*, but the point is that he had no need to do so.

**Gould and defamatory satire**

Like political satire, non-political defamatory satire was written in the reigns of Charles, James, and William—but the vast majority of late-seventeenth-century exemplars differ fundamentally from their Carolean predecessors. For reasons I have already explained, defamatory satire at the end of the century is increasingly generalized. With the shift from scribal circulation to print, moreover, touchy satire became a riskier prospect. Subject to libel charges, publishers were understandably resistant to issuing the sort of vulgar, slanderous fare that had thrived in a world of manuscript transmission. Defamatory, injurious satire is not, at the end of the century, what it had been for Rochester, Butler, and their contemporaries. We need to ask, therefore, what sort of defamatory satires are written in this period, by whom, and why.

The best-known and perhaps the most prolific defamatory satirist was Robert Gould. Gould produced quite a lot of scabrous satire in this period, penning obscenities worthy of Rochester and railing with a ferocity worthy of Oldham. Although his often-reprinted *Love given o’re* originally appeared in 1682, he belongs not to the reign of Charles II but to that of James and then of William. Carolean satirists were certainly prepared to abuse, to be spiteful, to sling dirt—but very few of them explicitly professed a moral basis for their condemnation. Gould does precisely that, slashing individuals and groups and all of
humanity in what Susan M. Martin describes as “fiercely moral” and “viciously negative” satire. In the prologue to the “Satyrs and Epistles” section of *Poems Chiefly consisting of Satyrs and Satyrical Epistles* (1689), Gould insists that “Mankind is Criminal, their Acts, their Thoughts; / ’Tis Charity to tell ’em of their Fau’ts.” Satire, he claims, “is our truest Friend, / For none before they know their Faults can mend” (132, 134). But, despite his loud trumpeting of reformative intentions, he writes not to correct but to abuse and punish. Gould rages against everything, sometimes generally and sometimes particularly, and he does so with embittered gusto. Writing for print rather than for a small coterie, he either deprecates extremely general types or targets individuals of sufficient public reputation that readers will know them.

Gould’s particularized satires are on not minor court ladies but on widely recognizable public figures. In *The Laureat* (1687), he ravages Dryden as a perfidious writer of “Apostate Rhimes, / The Curse of Ours, the Scoff of Future Times.” The Poet Laureate is decried as a turn-coat, as villainous as his Achitophel and less “stedfast” than his Zimri (1, 2). Dryden is but one of Gould’s targets in *A Satyr against the Playhouse* (in the 1689 Poems), where he scorns an increasingly degenerate playhouse, the playwrights, the actors and actresses, and the audience—which, taken together, represent “the sum total of all Infamy.” His depiction is caustic. The actors are “A pack of idle, pimping, spunging Slaves, / A Miscellany of Rogues, Fools and Knaves” who “justly merit to be punish’t more” (185, 184). Gould’s account of the stage’s dissipation is damning, Martin points out, but “he makes no attempt whatsoever to propose a remedy for the ills which he perceives.” The negativity is familiar enough, but the severity of Gould’s moral fervor is unusual, distinguishing him from Oldham and other Carolean predecessors. How much readership he would have had in Charles’s reign I have to wonder. The overt moral imperative


behind his verse reflects the changing assumptions of writers and readers vis-à-vis certain kinds of damaging satire.

A high percentage of the defamatory verse in this period is exceedingly general. Gould’s most famous satire is *Love given o’re: or, a Satyr against the Pride, Lust, Inconstancy, &c. of Woman*, a violent attack on women that inspired many anti-female satires and generated feminist counter-attacks. No doubt Gould was a misogynist—he was a thorough-going misanthropist, if the satires are anything to go by—but few of the other participants in the anti-feminist/feminist satiric war demonstrate anything like the same venom. The first response to Gould was Sarah Fyge Egerton’s *The Female Advocate* (1686; 4d*), which Felicity A. Nussbaum hails as “a prototype of defenses of the sex.” Egerton’s retaliation is predictable, insistent upon man’s inconstancy and woman’s rationality and devotedness. She defends woman as man’s necessary and God-given helpmeet, observing that, while Eve was tempted by the devil himself, man was swayed only by woman, making his the greater sin. To the battle of the sexes Richard Ames contributed *Sylvia’s Revenge, or, a Satyr against Man; in Answer to the Satyr against Woman* (1688; 4d*) and *The Folly of Love, or, an Essay upon Satyr against Woman* (1691; 4d*). The last piece is witty and clever but bitey, among the best of the she-satires, though it was evidently meant mostly to amuse and entertain. Several of the anti-feminist satires, like Ames’s *The Folly of Love*, communicate

57 Much of Gould’s work is of this kind. *A Satyr upon Man* (included in his *Poems*) is a sort of sequel to *Love given o’re*; the earlier satire had excoriated the fair sex, and here he flogs their male counterparts and concludes cynically that mankind is uniformly despicable. In *Jack Pavy, Alias Jack Adams* (included in the 1689 *Poems*) and *The Corruption of the Times by Money, a Satyr* (1693), Gould is just as gloomy. In the former, he argues that the more humans know the more they suffer, and in the latter, he complains bitterly about the destructive consequences of universal greed.


59 See also *The Lost Maiden-head: or, Sylvia’s Farewell to Love. A New Satyr against Man* (1691), *The Restor’d Maiden-head. A New Satyr against Woman* (1691), Ames’s *The Female Fire-Ships. A Satyr against Whoring* (1691; 3d*), Gould’s *A Satyr against Wooing: With a View of the Ill Consequences that attend it* (1698), and the anonymous *Corinna; or, Humane Frailty. a Poem* (1699; 4d*).
not just generalized misogyny but a particular warning against matrimony.\textsuperscript{60} For the most part, however, these works are primarily exercises in a highly popular form of generalized defamation.

These satires are varyingly incisive or playful, aggressive or restrained, but their authors tend to recite standard charges in largely formulaic ways. Ames’s \textit{Sylvia’s Revenge}—a “Satyr against Man”—is radically different from (say) Rochester’s \textit{Satyre against Reason and Mankind}. The comparison is extreme but helpful: however much Ames means what he is saying, his comprehensive denunciation is far tamer than Rochester’s. The blistering diatribe directed against the faithless Corinna in \textit{A Ramble in St. James’s Park} is convincingly acid and despairing in ways Gould’s contemporaries do not match. Rochester’s rambler observes a horde of drunken libertines pursuing “The sav’ry scent of Salt-swolne Cunt,” and watches in horror as his beloved welcomes their advances. Had his darling strumpet been more discriminating, the rambler explains, he would not be so disgusted—but instead she is “A Passive Pot for Fools to spend in,” and he vows to ruin her life (ll. 86, 102). Rochester does not communicate a clear-cut positive or provide an indisputable moral norm. Gould, Ames, Egerton, and others are much sharper in their distinctions of good and bad, and also much less fiery. Beside Rochester, lines like these seem pale and abstract: “Woman, there’s Ropes and Daggers in the Name; / The Dregs of the Creation, Nature’s Shame” (\textit{The Restor’d Maiden-head}, 5). These works are meant for wider consumption (and sold at prices cheap enough to make that possible), and the nature of the satire reflects that expectation. A great deal of satire is written against women in the last forty years of the seventeenth century, whether in the form of personal lampoonery in the 1670s or generalized denunciation a generation later. Why this anti-feminist satire represents such a conspicuous phenomenon is now probably unknowable. For the 1690s, given the popularity and success of Gould’s \textit{Love given o’re}, we have to entertain the possibility that some of the other contributors to this battle of the sexes simply had an eye to the main chance. Ames

\textsuperscript{60} Examples of satires concerned more specifically with the ills of matrimony are \textit{Antigamus or a Satyr against Marriage} (Oxford: 1691), Ames’s \textit{Sylvia’s Complaint, of her Sexes Unhappiness} (1692; 4d\textsuperscript{*}), and \textit{A Satyr against Marriage} (1700).
may have been expressing genuine hostility toward women; he could also have been writing popular
entertainment, peddling spirited misogyny on the grounds that it would sell.

What is not debatable is the fact that, however “moral” are the attacks on female or male
inconstancy, lust, and immodesty, they could not really have been meant to reform their targets. They are
plenty abusive, but their potential to do real damage is limited. This defamatory satire was evidently
popular, but it has little point, either negative or positive, excepting perhaps the more argumentative
social commentaries on the inequalities of marriage. Denigratory satire in the reign of Charles II was
abundant, and abundantly castigatory. Like political satire of that period, it tended to be present-centered,
local, particularized, and ultimately pragmatic in terms of wishing for a negative outcome for the target.
Satirists named names and flayed individuals with gruesome clarity and verve, and, for the most part, they
could count on their readers to “get” (and to relish) the abuse. Because of the changes in court culture,
attacks on individuals become much less viable post-1688; only very public people would have been
readily recognizable to a broad readership.

Court lampoons had constituted a substantial percentage of Carolean defamation—but they are
far less numerous during the reigns of James and William. James’s court was not his brother’s. Unlike
Charles, he cultivated an “image of frugality, sobriety, and more refined ceremony,” says Alan Marshall,
and insofar as possible scandal was kept “out of sight.” William and Mary’s court was yet more rigidly
moralistic: the character of neither monarch “was conducive to the active social side of the court that
could attract much ‘wit’. . . . William’s pleasures were few, and for the most part typically robust, mainly
the military arts, hunting and shooting.”61 Charles alone had given the satirists much to snipe at; the
promiscuity of Rochester’s “easiest King” was a major liability, and attacks on him and on his court
ladies often had political implications. In James’s reign, and especially in William’s, grist for the gossip
mill and material for lampoonists was much harder to come by.

61 Marshall, The Age of Faction: Court Politics, 1660-1702 (Manchester: Manchester University Press,
1999), 77, 78, 81. Wilson argues that, while certainly “there were still secret sinners about the Court of King
James,” nevertheless “satirists, short on gossip and unwilling to turn to political or religious problems, had to
content themselves with old tales and scraps of scandal” (Court Satires, 159).
Satire directed at court figures is considerably less cutting than in Charles’s reign, and it makes up a much smaller percentage of abusive satire than it had in the 1670s and early 1680s. The Two Tom Lucys (wr. 1686) tamely recounts the recent misdeeds of a couple of courtiers. To Capt. Warcup (wr. 1686), as Wilson explains, “begins with sneers at a group of little poets and proceeds with splenetic attacks on minor members of a staid, dull Court.” Madam Le Croix (wr. 1686) is a lifeless summary of recent court scandals; The Lovers’ Session in imitation of Sir John Suckling’s ‘Session of the Poets’ (wr. 1687) is a witty satirical appraisal of various figures, written by someone primarily amusing himself. Julian’s Farewell to the Coquets (wr. 1687) homes in on an insignificant family, and The Compleat Fop (wr. 1685) mildly mocks a common court type. Among the liveliest and bawdiest court satires is The Session of Ladies (wr. 1688), which is personally nasty and obscene. Its graphic coarseness sets it apart from other examples from James’s reign: the satirist describes “pockey lewd Hinton,” the “chestnut-maned Boutell, whom all the Town fucks,” and “chaste Mrs. Barry, i’th’ midst of a flux,” who makes a lover “a present of chancre and pox” (ll. 29, 33, 35-36). With few exceptions, however, the court satires of the late-seventeenth century are mean-spirited but without real bite, and they target figures of marginal importance. The decline of nasty personal satire is disappointing for those who revel in derisive Carolean scurrility, but the falling off of lampoonery was made all but inevitable by radically altered extra-literary circumstances.

**Garth and Blackmore**

Sir Samuel Garth and Sir Richard Blackmore were celebrities in their day, though of a very different sort. Garth was a physician of some stature but was scarcely known outside his profession before the publication of The Dispensary in 1699. With that poem, Richard I. Cook explains, he “was elevated

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62 Wilson, *Court Satires*, 159.
almost overnight to a position of eminence among the wits of the literary world.”

Blackmore was much reviled—Richard Terry has described him as “perhaps the most roundly and routinely vilified of all English poets”—and that reputation developed over the course of several years and works. Neither Garth nor Blackmore wrote primarily to make a living; we have nothing to suggest that Garth sought a literary reputation; their satire was public and signed, but neither chiefly defamatory (like Gould’s) nor principally commercial (like Ward’s). Blackmore’s *Satyr against Wit* is in part a response to *The Dispensary*, and, while they represent different kinds of satire, their authors were entangled in the same social and literary controversies. Both poets are decidedly non-Carolean authors: nothing quite like Garth’s poem is found in the reign of Charles II, and one can easily imagine what the likes of Rochester and Butler would have said about Blackmore’s moralizing. And yet neither do they seem very “like” most of their contemporary verse satirists. Given the originality, atypicality, and popularity of *The Dispensary*, the relative scarcity of modern critical comment on that poem is surprising. What sort of satire did Garth and Blackmore produce, and why was Garth’s in particular so successful?

*The Dispensary* is a mock-epic in six cantos describing a wrangle between physicians and dispensarians—a battle that had been raging throughout the 1690s. Garth and his allies (physicians) wanted to establish a dispensary where lower-class patients could buy medicine at cheaper costs; their opponents (mostly apothecaries, though also some physicians) resisted mightily, knowing that if the scheme were realized they would lose profits. In 1696, the Committee on Medicines passed a resolution requiring all members to contribute money toward “the furnishing [of] a Repository of Medicines, out of wch the poor shall be supplied”; Garth was one of the first to sign. Two years later the dispensary was open for business, though the hostilities had not ceased—apothecaries and the so-called “Apothecaries

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63 Cook, *Sir Samuel Garth* (Boston: Twayne, 1980), 15. *The Dispensary* was extremely popular: it went through three editions within five weeks; new editions appeared throughout the eighteenth-century editions; by 1768 it was in its eleventh London edition.


Physicians” continued to oppose the innovation, and its supporters continued to promote it. Garth’s poem belongs to this debate, describing in mock-heroic form the war between the physicians and the apothecaries. While the former are building their dispensary, the druggist Horoscope, the greedy Querpo, the pretentious and untalented Bard (Blackmore), and the rest of the anti-dispensarians plan an assault. The gods are on the side of right, however, and forewarn the physicians of the coming attack; a long skirmish ensues, ending when the goddess Health demands a ceasefire. She and a physician travel to the underworld to find a solution to the problem. They are told to seek “the matchless Atticus” (Lord Somers, president of the Royal Society and lord chancellor of England): “Your Wounds he’ll close, and sov’reignly restore / Your Science to the height it had before.” Health and the physician return to England, presumably to beg help from Atticus and so to settle the dispute.66

Although The Dispensary does not end with the physicians triumphant—we are not told what Atticus will decide—the poem clearly supports them. Garth ridicules the druggists, comically but thoroughly and caustically. When Horoscope faints in the second canto, he is revived by his assistant (“Officious Squirt”), who applies “Steam” from a urinal; when he decides in canto III to take action, he invokes the goddess Disease, promising that in return for her help, the apothecaries will “fix [her] Empire”—that is, the druggists will work against good health (17, 22). The dispensarians are not exactly glorified, but they are not mocked in anything like the same way. “Garth’s sympathies are never in doubt,” Cook concludes, but “he deliberately minimizes his overt praise for the dispensarians: their moral superiority is conveyed not so much in positive terms as in the contrast offered by the egregious roguery

66 p. 70. All references to The Dispensary are to Jo Allen Bradham’s facsimile edition (Delmar, NY: Scholars’ Facsimiles & Reprints, 1975). Bradham uses the ninth edition (printed in Dublin in 1725), “selected because of the fullness of the Compleat Key to the Dispensary and because the Key in that edition was printed with the poem, not separately.” The poem itself is textually identical—except some variation in punctuation—to the seventh London edition (1714), the last to appear in Garth’s lifetime (9). The most substantial change the original version of The Dispensary underwent was in the second edition (also 1699), “a much expanded version of the first” that included a prefatory explanation, a dedication, and four laudatory letters to Garth (6).
of their opponents.” Garth lampoons the anti-dispensarians, but the title of the poem names that which the poet supports, not what he targets. The satiric agenda is positive as much as negative.

_The Dispensary_ has been described in blandly general terms—Jo Allen Bradham blithely suggests that Garth’s “purpose is moral reformation”—and as a bridge between the mock-heroics of Dryden and Pope. Ronald Paulson has contended that “Mac Flecknoe served (by way of Samuel Garth’s _Dispensary_ of 1699) as model for Pope’s mock-epic _Dunciad._” But Garth’s mock-epic has little in common with Dryden’s lampooning of a literary rival, and neither does it have much to do with Pope’s battering of the dunces—or, for that matter, his eloquent and well-crafted account of Lord Petre’s cutting of a love-lock from Arabella Fermor. Neither, finally, is it adequately characterized as a poem concerned about the “danger to traditional institutions from the chaos of individual interests,” or as an attempt “to transform the contemporary conflict between London physicians and druggists into an Homeric _agon._”

Garth may have wanted his poem to transcend its moment, but his main objective appears to have been to influence a particular issue at a particular time—and he is having a lot of fun. In the preface to the poem’s second edition, he insists that he wrote _The Dispensary_ in an “endeavor to Rally some of our disaffected Members [of the Royal College of Physicians; e.g., Blackmore] into a Sense of their Duty.” And Garth’s satire was taken in that manner. “So well-received was the poem,” Cook explains, “that two

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67 Cook, _Sir Samuel Garth_, 77.
68 Bradham, _Introduction to The Dispensary_, 9
69 Paulson, “Dryden and the energies of satire,” 47. Such has been Garth’s place in literary history: in 1974, in one of the few scholarly pieces to be devoted solely to Garth, John F. Sena argued that, “Like Dryden and Pope, Garth adopted the mock-heroic form as an effective means of defining the values of his world.” See “Samuel Garth’s _The Dispensary_,” _Texas Studies in Literature and Language_ 15 (1974): 639-48, at 642. These critics seem to have no interest in a major social issue of the day.
70 Gregory G. Colomb, _Designs on Truth: The Poetics of the Augustan Mock-Epic_ (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 98; Blanford Parker, “Modes of Mockery: The Significance of Mock-poetic Forms in the Enlightenment,” in _Companion to Satire_, ed. Quintero, 495-509, at 503. Parker explains Garth’s poem as valuable primarily for its contribution to Pope’s poetic education (500), and concludes that “Garth showed the way to illuminate through irony quotidian and contemporary objects by placing them in the scene—the imaginative field—of the heroic” (503). His poem is “clever,” Parker argues, “But Pope could do more in _The Rape of the Lock_” (504).
historians of the Society of Apothecaries credit Garth with having all but chased the opposition from the field,” though, as Cook also points out, anti-dispensarian counterblasts attest to a still-vocal opposition.  

Blackmore’s *Satyr against Wit* is at once a hostile reply to Garth’s attack on him and a continuation of his own moralistic literary program. Blackmore led the “Apothecaries Physicians” against the building of the dispensary, and he is part of the opposition caricatured in Garth’s poem, an ally of the ridiculous Horoscope and the avaricious Querpo. As commentators on the Garth-Blackmore battle have recognized, however, Garth sneers at his enemy’s verses, not his position on the drug repository. One suspects that Garth knew enough of Blackmore to understand that derision of his literary principles and talents would have especial sting: Samuel Johnson reflected that Blackmore “wrote not for a livelihood but for fame; or, if he may tell his own motives, for a nobler purpose, to engage poetry in the cause of Virtue.” However righteous his apparent aims, Blackmore was the butt of many wits’ jokes, and he gave as much—if rarely as good—as he got. He perceived in some of his contemporaries (especially Dryden, Congreve, Garth, and Southerne) nothing less than social evil, and he had pointed this out in no uncertain terms in *Prince Arthur* and *King Arthur*. In *A Satyr against Wit*, he again champions a reformation of literary manners, rebuking many of the wits for their contribution to the degeneracy of the times: “Who can forbear, and tamely silent sit,” he asks, alluding to Juvenal, “And see his Native Land undone by Wit?”  

Blackmore charges the “Insect-Wits” (l. 8) with threatening to ruin the country, and however overblown the indictment, he evidently means it. He does not offer a precise definition of the “wit” he is satirizing, but his high-minded exhortation to his readers makes plain the nature of the poets’ offense.

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71 Cook, *Sir Samuel Garth*, 58.
73 Richard C. Boys gives a full account of Blackmore’s battle with the wits—the background to the *Satyr against Wit*—in his *Sir Richard Blackmore and the Wits: A Study of ‘Commendatory Verses on the Author of the Two Arthurs and the Satyr against Wit’* (1700) (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1949), chap. 1.
Let those Correction have, and not Applause,
That Heav’n affront and ridicule its Laws.
No sober Judge will Atheism e’er permit
To pass for Sense, or Blasphemy for Wit.
Declare that what’s Obscene shall give Offence,
Let want of Decency be want of Sense. (ll. 293-98)

The wits whom Blackmore targets are, from his perspective, obscene blasphemers, and here he calls for higher standards, urging readers to connect these authors’ ways of writing with profanity. Blackmore claims a dignified moral basis for his denunciation of immoral wits, but he also slings a fair amount of dirt. He names names, and he includes his share of crudity even as he declaims against obscene wit: the poets he describes “strain / Always to say fine Things, but strive in vain / Urg’d with a dry Tenesmus of the Brain” (ll. 39-41). 74

I have argued that the prominence of generalized satire in this period has much to do with changes in audience and assumed bases of knowledge; The Dispensary and The Satyr against Wit represent another possibility. Garth’s satire is highly topical, but it could afford to be. Garth is addressing an issue very well- and widely-known, a public controversy of considerable social import and presumably of real interest to many readers. Blackmore’s poem is loosely connected to the same debate; the title page to A Satyr against Wit explains it as a response to The Dispensary. Blackmore wrote with conviction, but he almost certainly also hoped to capitalize on the popularity of his rival’s blockbuster. Blackmore’s poem is at once social commentary on a conspicuous issue, a response to Garth penned by a piqued victim, and a piece of spiteful defamation made intelligible by the public status of its targets. The Dispensary and the Satyr against Wit do not at all resemble Ward’s generalized entertainments and Gould’s unconstructive grumblings. Garth and Blackmore found a readership by other means.

74 “The biliousness of Blackmore’s imagery,” Terry rightly observes, “could seem out of keeping with a poem otherwise dedicated to upholding standards of decency in the literary realm” (Mock-Heroic from Butler to Cowper, 69).
Brown, Ward, and commercial satire

In the reign of Charles II, many gentlemen had written satire, though rarely for print. Post-1688, a noticeably smaller percentage of satire was produced by the gentry. Some gentlemen practiced satire: Garth wrote for a cause, Blackmore for a reputation, Prior in the hopes of patronage; the likes of Sir Fleetwood Sheppard and the Earl of Dorset wrote but did not publish satire. The commercial satirist is a category without parallel in the Carolean period, and on average the social level of satirists is distinctly lower in the 1690s than it had been two decades earlier. Satirists like Tom Brown and Ned Ward address a much more public audience than had Carolean satirists. Neither is producing gutter journalism, but their work is essentially popular and commercial; their satires, at least initially, are not printed in great books and sold at high prices. They pay little attention to literary quality or philosophical profundity. Ward and Brown are often lumped together with Gould, Tutchin, Defoe, and minor hack poets of this period, but they are manifestly unlike those writers. Although they both lived by the pen, writing for bread and writing a lot, moreover, in satiric practice they differ significantly from each other.

Brown is sui generis—he does not fit any single category well. Although he is chiefly remembered as a “facetious” hack poet who led a rowdy personal life, he does not lack sobriety. Many of his prose and verse pieces are neither playful nor frivolous; he is influenced by the classics; his most famous collection, Amusements Serious and Comical (1700), is largely a translation of a 1699 French work of that title; he is surprisingly learned and bookish, proudly erudite in a way Ward is not. Brown is capable of lighthearted and mischievous banter, as in some of his contributions to the Commendatory Verses written against Blackmore, and equally capable of blistering personal abuse and biting political commentary. His attack on Dryden in The Reasons of Mr. Bays Changing his Religion (1688) has nothing to do with religious questions in general or The Hind and the Panther in particular—it is simply

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75 Most of Ward’s individual pieces went for 6d, though some longer works were 1s, as was his 94-page Dissenting Hypocrite of 1704. A high percentage of his publications include advertisements for his other works (usually immediately following the title page or at the very end of the text), listing the available pieces and their prices. The practice is by no means unique to him or to other primarily commercial satirists, but it does make plain his desire to sell his product.
an exercise in vindictive detraction. His 1707 Works include a concentrated version of this satire: To Mr. Dryden, on his Conversion rebukes Dryden as “Traytor to God, and Rebel to thy Pen, / Priest-ridden Poet, perjur’d Son of Ben.”

Brown pokes fun at Thomas Durfey’s stutter and derides his principles in To the Author of Gloriana (wr. 1695). He also writes cutting epigrams on Blackmore: “Thine is the only muse in British ground, / Whose satire tickles and whose praises wound.”

Brown bludgeons individuals—always major personalities—with noticeable energy, and his tongue is just as sharp in his political satires. His Advice To the Kentish Long-Tails (1701) is accusatory, but his most trenchant socio-political satire is his A Satyr upon the French King, Written by a Non-Swearing Parson, and drop’d out of his Pocket at Samm’s Coffee-House (1697; 1d*). The piece is a response to the Treaty of Ryswick, and Brown deplores Louis and ruthlessly mocks the plight of the Jacobites. A high Tory—but no Catholic—he asks,

Who cou’d have e’re believ’d, unless in Spite,  
Lewis le Grand wou’d turn rank Williamite?  
Thou, that hast Look’d so fierce, and Talk’d so bigg,  
In thy Old Age to dwindle to a Whigg! (ll. 14-17)

The persona is admittedly an unsympathetic figure, but, as Frank H. Ellis points out, his rendition of personal losses “constitute the emotional center of the poem. . . . Since 1689 the speaker has lived in London on pawn tickets, credit, and the hope of a second Stuart restoration.”


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78 Brown’s personal attacks are often politically motivated, as in his blistering satires against Defoe. Upon the Anonymous Author of, Legion’s Humble Address to the Lords and To that Most Senseless Scoundrel, the Author of Legion’s Humble Address to the Lords (both printed in Works, 1) are witty but vicious. In the first, he blasts Defoe as “Thou Tool of Faction,” who “woud’st with War and Blood thy Country fill, / Were but thy Power as rampant as thy Will” (ll. 1, 5-6). Whatever the sting, Brown’s satire is not just a mean-spirited lampoon; his hostility toward the author of Legion’s Humble Address is an attempt to discredit a political opponent and that rival’s position.
79 Ellis, POAS-Y, 6:3.
government took offense and Brown was arrested.\(^80\) As a satirist, Brown is by turns good-humored and sneering; he writes some general sketches of London low-life but a great many highly particularized attacks; he addresses current events like Sherlock’s conversion and the Kent petition, but almost never appears to be seeking a practical positive effect.\(^81\) He does, however, pass judgment—with varying degrees of intensity and sharpness. The often penetratingly judgmental quality of his satire, his propensity for piercing sarcasm, and his frequent targeting of specific individuals all distinguish him from his contemporary and fellow commercial hack, Ned Ward.

Most of Ward’s early satires are generalized and apparently meant to amuse, though some of his later satires (covered in the next chapter) are more politicized. In *Sot’s Paradise: or, The Humours of a Derby-Ale-House: with A Satyr upon the Ale* (1698), he criticizes cheating vintners and ale-house keepers in rollicking *hudibrastics*. The speaker, “Loaded with Sorrow” (5), heads for the ale-house to find solace but is instead frustrated by the drunken fools he meets and finally crawls home disappointed. The satire on the ale—rather than on the ale-house and its barflies—is purely frivolous: “Thou mak’st us Fat in little time ’tis true, / The same will Swins-Flesh and Potatoes do; / They covet Flesh, not Brains, that follow you” (15). *Labour in Vain: or, What Signifies Little or Nothing* (1700; 6d) and *A Journey to Hell: or, a Visit paid to the Devil* (in 3 parts, 1700-1705) are both essentially funny pieces. In *A Journey to Hell*, Ward attacks dissenting ministers, physicians, apothecaries, vintners, wits, lawyers, careless printers, and roguish publishers. Some representatives of offended groups issued counter-attacks,\(^82\) but whatever the

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\(^80\) On the *Satyr upon the French King* and Brown’s subsequent arrest, see Boyce, *Tom Brown of Facetious Memory*, 60-63.

\(^81\) As Boyce explains, “The Kentish petition to the House of Commons in 1701, a fancied conversation between Daniel Defoe and the pillory, the pompous fustian of Sir Richard Blackmore, the new tax on salt, or Tom D’Urfey’s new odes—it is matters like these chiefly which provoked activity from his lazy and earthborn muse.” His most memorable works “are of the seasonal variety—the scornful, stabbing lines on D’Urfey, the dramatic presentation of the dilemma of the Jacobites in 1697, an elegy on the death of Millington the auctioneer, and his best drinking songs” (*Tom Brown of Facetious Memory*, 65-66). He “was busy digesting and presenting not immortal truth and beauty but rather the political and ecclesiastical developments of the moment” (68).

\(^82\) *The Devil’s Journey to London: or, The Visit Repaid Ned W[ar]d* counters Ward from an apothecary’s point of view, and *The Shoe-Maker Beyond his Last: or, a satyr upon Scurrilous Poets, especially Ned W[ar]d* appears to have been written by a churchman.
social barbs present in his satire, Ward’s purpose was evidently diversion, not reformation or even punitive attack.

Ward’s comic narratives tend to supply everything a reader needs to comprehend the satire. His first known work and one of his most famous pieces—*The Poet’s Ramble after Riches, or, a Nights Transactions Upon the Road Burlesqu’d* (1691)—is a jaunty romp, comprising social and political satire but ultimately an exercise in mildly satirical story-telling. One episode in particular has some political zing: the speaker reports to a friend that James has been dethroned, and William is described not as Protestant savior but as barbaric usurper. But the speaker finishes his account of the coup and promptly asks for supper, unfazed by the news he has delivered. Ward occasionally raises serious issues in passing, but especially early in his career they are not the point. They seem to serve only to locate the satire, to make the story all the more relevant to English readers of the 1690s. *A Trip to Jamaica: With a True Character of the People and Island* (1698; 6d) relates a real-life journey, no doubt with some poetic license: Ward was sorely disappointed when he went seeking his fortune in Jamaica, and here he voices disgust with the island and its people. His vituperative travelogue was evidently popular.  

Ward used the “journey” motif again and again as a vehicle for pop satirical reportage, often employing local settings that would have had special appeal for English readers. Other examples of Ward’s journalistic/narrative satire include: *A Trip to New-England. With a Character of the Country and People, both English and Indians* (1699), *A Frolick to Horn-Fair, With a Walk from Cuckold’s-Point through Deptford and Greenwich* (1700), *A Step to Stir-Bitch-Fair, with Remarks upon the University of Cambridge* (1700), *A Step to the Bath: with A Character Of The Place* (1700), *The Revels of the Gods: or, a Ramble thro’ the Heavens* (1701), *The Rambling Fuddle-Caps: or, A Tavern Struggle for a Kiss* (1706), and—much later—*The Merry Travellers: or, A Trip upon Ten-Toes, from Moorfields to Bromley* (1721-22).
could sneer at the neat putdown of rackety London life. *The Rambling Rakes: or, London Libertines* (1700; 6d) and *Three Nights Adventures: Or, Accidental Intrigues* (1701) are spicy tales of merry-making, full of women and wine and nocturnal pleasures. In *The Rambling Rakes*—a prose piece—the speaker describes his visit to “the floating Seraglio,” where he and his companions were greeted by “a Brace of Harlots,” who tender “an invitation to Dance: The Countenance of the Whores, was an Antidote against Carnality to us; not but we were willing to be Lew’d, tho’ not with such Common-Strumpets” (8). These two satires represent, in Troyer’s phrasing, “Ward’s most slavish attempts at catering to the baser tastes of his public.”85 This is not the stuff of solemn moralizing. We are not, insofar as I can determine, meant to judge the speaker. Like Ward’s other works, these lack the “moral purpose” that satire theorists often emphasize as requisite to the form.

Satire is neither a political weapon nor a moral instrument for Ward, at least early in his career.86 He is not trying to denounce, provoke thought, or make a case; his object is not to influence present-day circumstances, denigrate an enemy, or defend a cause; the results are neither propaganda nor social commentary. Satire is Ward’s trade, and he tells stories that will entice and entertain readers. Ward and Defoe are both usually regarded as mercenary drudges making their livings off of their pens, but they have little in common. I will deal more with Defoe in chapter 5, but even the example of *The True-Born Englishman* suggests a major disparity between these two hack poets. Defoe’s defense of William is an angry response to a perceived attack on the king whom he regarded as England’s savior; his anti-Catholicism is deeply-felt and direly important to him and his view of the world. Here and elsewhere, Defoe’s satire is, among other things, principled argumentation. Ward’s commercial entertainments represent an entirely distinct concept of satire. J. Paul Hunter likens Ward not to Defoe but to Gould. They “announce their quarry with flailing bluster and claim huge consequence, but usually end up at best with superficial observation on insignificant matters,” he says, and their “charges are often trivial, and the

86 As Boyce says of Ward, he “suffered, for reasons not wholly economic, from a *furor scribendi*, and since satire was then the thing, his flow of words often took that form. But his nature, being expansive and benevolent, was more suitable to the tavern-keeper than the satirist” (*Tom Brown of Facetious Memory*, 128).
satire is bland, toothless and pretty insignificant.”\textsuperscript{87} The comparison has some utility: both Gould and Ward are responding to conditions that will not allow for much more than what they do. Neither writer could realistically have printed fierce lampoons of the sort ubiquitous in the Carolean period. But Ward is not Gould any more than he is Defoe: as general as Gould’s attacks are, they are also fulminatory and at least putatively driven by moral judgment. Ward does not claim for himself very much consequence, and neither does he work up much steam. He is cranking out pop journalism keen to market his wares—he is not a moral, political, social, or defamatory satirist, but a \textit{commercial} one. His ventures represent a type of highly generalized satire, common in the late seventeenth century but entirely without Carolean precedent.

Carolean poets did not commit much energy to satirizing abstractions. How many attacks on money or alcohol or inconstancy do we find in the period from 1660 to 1685? What gives the verse covered in chapter 3 much of its intensity is its forceful specificity: writers targeted clearly defined individuals, voiced anxiety about very particular problems and issues, raised questions with immediate relevance, and were expressly concerned with the here and now. Much of the political satire in the reigns of James and William is likewise present-centered and issue-based, but at the end of the century a new category of verse satire appears: a number of writers use satire, a notoriously topical form, to hold forth against very general vices (e.g., Love of Money) or inanimate objects (e.g., Wine).

The sweepingly general attacks current in this period naturally lack the acerbity of more topical abuse. The lethal spirits are a favorite target of late-seventeenth-century satirists: an anonymous poet rails against the “damn’d \textit{Stygian Juyce}, that dost bewitch” in \textit{A Satyr against Brandy} (1683), and other satirists pen comic poems on drinking and the geniality associated with inebriation (l. 1).\textsuperscript{88} Writers complain about the universal pursuit of wealth, as Gould does in \textit{The Corruption of the Times by Money}

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\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{87} Hunter, “Political, satirical, didactic and lyric poetry,” 193.
  \item \textsuperscript{88} See, for instance, Ames’s \textit{The Search after Claret; or, a Visitation of the Vintners} (1691; 6d*), \textit{Fatal Friendship; or, the Drunkards Misery: being a Satyr against Hard Drinking} (1693; 6d*), \textit{The Bacchanalian Sessions; or the Contention of Liquors: with A Farewel to Wine} (1693), and—a bit later—\textit{A Satyr Against Wine. With a Poem In Praise of Small Beer} (1705).
\end{itemize}
(1693) and Ward in *Bribery and Simony; or, a Satyr Against the Corrupt Use of Money* (1703). Other satirists write against “Painting” (1697), “Ingratitude” (1699), and even “Confinement” (1702). In 1704, Wycherley (?) publishes *The Folly of Industry: or, the Busy Man Expos’d. A Satyr*, a clever and playful piece of entertainment. Such bland declamations have been found unappetizing and unworthy of modern critical attention. Unexciting they certainly are, but they are best understood as experimental responses to a changing world. Like Ward’s “journey” satires, these works are self-conveying: they do not depend for their effects on knowledge extrinsic to the text. Such satire does not always work well as printed verse—but it can be extremely effective on stage.

**IV. Dramatic satire**

Studies of satire in the long eighteenth century usually privilege verse, treat a few prose works at some length, and have very little to say about drama. A few well-known dramatic satires are frequently cited if not much discussed—the big titles are *The Rehearsal*, *The Beggar’s Opera*, and *Tom Thumb*—but from the period under review here only *The Way of the World* figures at all, and it only *en passant*. In Jean I. Marsden’s 2007 survey of “Dramatic Satire in the Restoration and Eighteenth Century,” she deals very briefly with a number of mostly Carolean plays, but essentially skips from *The Rehearsal* to Gay and Fielding. The scant attention paid to end-of-century dramatic satire is unfortunate: in these years, much of the best, liveliest, and most forceful satire is found on stage.

What are playwrights doing with satire in this period? Nineties drama differs greatly from that of the seventies, a fact pointed out—surprisingly late in the twentieth century—by A. H. Scouten, whose suggestions for differentiation have been fully borne out by Hume, Hughes, and others. Carolean norms do not abruptly vanish upon the death of Charles II. The most successful attempted continuations of

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89 Other examples include *The Miracles Perform’d by Money: A Poem* (1692), *Pecuniae Obediunt Omnia Money Does Master all Things, A Poem* (York: 1696), and *A Hymn to Money. A Satyr* (1704; 4d*).

90 Marsden, in *Companion to Satire*, ed. Quintero, 161-75.

Carolean comedy are those of Dryden (Amphitryon), Southerne (Sir Anthony Love [1690]), and Congreve (The Old Batchelour [1693]). Dryden’s message is dark and his satire sharp, and the play is much less vulgar than The Kind Keeper, but its farcical spiciness is undeniable. Congreve’s high-spirited play, which Henry Higden called snidely dubbed “the Baudy Batchelour,” is cynical in its attitude toward love and matrimony. The sex, deception, seduction, and cuckolding are energetically presented, however, substantially lightening the tone. Congreve’s next play, The Double-Dealer (1693) is a much harder and more negative comedy; the moral seriousness makes it heavy. The central figure is the villain Maskwell, whom the play reprehends quite sharply, and Congreve presents genuine evil with cold realism. The Double-Dealer did not do well: the times and values were changing.

Excepting the Carolean carry-overs and some experimentation, what we find in dramatic satire at the end of the century (and just beyond) are three quite different satiric enterprises: (1) exemplary and distributive justice satire, the principal exponent of which is Shadwell; (2) social satire sugarcoated with improbably happy endings or otherwise mitigated; and (3) hard-core harsh satire, sometimes seemingly calling for change and sometimes simply lamenting an appalling state of affairs.

Shadwell and exemplary comedy

Thomas Shadwell’s stock has never been high with modern scholars, and in satire studies he gets no mention whatever. In fact he writes several satirical or partly satirical works—mostly dramatic, though also a small number of poems—both in the Carolean period and later in the century. His satiric plays in the reign of Charles II are varied, but none of them is really “like” what he does in the late eighties and

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92 Higden’s quotation comes from the preface to his The Wary Widdow: or, Sir Noisy Parrat (1693). Maximillian E. Novak rightly points out that, “Congreve’s play is far from the bawdiest of the many cuckolding comedies of the Restoration, but Higden’s response may be a good indication of changing values.” See William Congreve (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1971), 90.

93 An example of experimentation is Elkanah Settle’s New Athenian Comedy (1693), a literary satire on John Dunton and the Athenian Mercury (1691-96) that was never staged. Settle’s play has received virtually no modern critical commentary. Paul D. Cannan’s helpful discussion of Dunton’s Athenian Mercury treats Settle’s satire among other contemporary responses to and attitudes toward Dunton’s periodical. See The Emergence of Dramatic Criticism in England: From Jonson to Pope (New York: Palgrave, 2006), especially 148-49.
early nineties. In plays like *The Squire of Alsatia* (1688) and *The Scowrers* (1690), he goes in a different
direction, writing overtly exemplary satire for a new audience.

What kind of satire did Shadwell produce in the reign of Charles II? *The Sullen Lovers* (1668)
includes stingingly funny caricatures of Sir Robert and Edward Howard (Sir Positive At-all and Poet
Ninny). He also targets the free-wheeling gentry, but the satiric thrust of the play is its humorous
representation of very particular characters and its lively action. Personation notwithstanding, Shadwell
tends, even in his early career, toward moralistic judgment—though he recognizes the need to pander to
an audience not inclined to welcome preachment. His sex comedies of the seventies, *Epsom-Wells* (1672)
and *The Virtuoso* (1676), are roistering plays filled with intrigue, copulation, and discovery. “The trio of
cuckolds” in *Epsom-Wells*, Richard W. Bevis argues, “exemplify the advent of the sex comedy that was
soon to flourish; the many minute complications of the plot add the pleasures of intrigue.” Bevis
concludes, probably rightly, that “the moralizing Shadwell of 1668-70 would have difficulty proving that
these very broad characters and events could ‘instruct’ us.” The *Virtuoso*—whose title character is the
ridiculous Sir Nicholas Gimcrack—is most often studied for its satire on science, and on the experiments
of the Royal Society in particular. The play does indeed have a moral. As Hughes points out,
Shadwell’s “earnest emphasis on the proper ends of knowledge” is very far “from Etherege’s open-
minded relativism and Wycherley’s labyrinthine skepticism,” and his attitude toward the intrigues
presented is indisputably negative. In his satirical tragedies, *The Libertine* (1675) and *The History of

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94 *The Humorists* (1670) similarly portrays a wide range of fools and fops, but the particularized
personation so central to *The Sullen Lovers* is absent. In the preface, however, Shadwell complains that opposition
to his satire had compelled substantial revisions: “I was forced, after I had finish’d it, to blot out the main design of
it; finding, that, contrary to my intention, it had given offence” (*The Complete Works of Thomas Shadwell*, ed.
Summers, 1:183). All references to Shadwell’s plays are to this edition. He claims that he had not gone after
individuals, but, as Hume says, what the prefatory comments suggest is “that Shadwell failed to get away with it a
second time, an impression sustained by the slightly patchy nature of the remains” (*Development*, 262). The original
MS is extant; it has been printed by Richard Perkin (Dublin: Laurel House Press, 1975), but without any sort of
annotation of Shadwell’s personation or topical references.

95 Bevis, *English Drama*, 82, 83.

96 On Shadwell’s satire on the Royal Society, see Albert S. Borgman, *Thomas Shadwell: His Life and

97 Hughes, *English Drama 1660-1700*, 155-60, quotation at 160.
Timon of Athens (1678), he likewise attacks the moral code of Carolean comedy. Shadwell was prepared to minimize his preaching in order to popularize his plays, but the impulse toward moral judgment is manifest.

In A True Widow (1678), Shadwell’s satiric moralizing is dominant, and for it the play was summarily damned. The highlight of the piece, and evidently among the only parts to which viewers warmed, is its play-within-a-play scene in Act IV. Like Dryden, Shadwell was displeased by the success of Durfey’s A Fond Husband—and here he condemns the vogue for farce and caricaturizes Durfey as Young Maggot. “The playhouse scene presents a Durfeyesque cuckolding intrigue,” Bevis explains, “while fractious spectators roar for even lower stuff.”98 A True Widow failed, and Shadwell knew why: “For some, I believe, wish’d all the Play like that part of a Farce in it; others knew not my intention in it, which was to expose the Style and Plot of Farce-Writers, to the utter confusion of damnable Farce, and all its wicked and foolish Adherents” (3:288). Shadwell’s satire in A True Widow is substantively similar to that in The Virtuoso, though his approach differs: in the earlier play, he had attacked the sex comedy boom from within, and here he denounces as an outsider. As always, he responded to failure by revising his methods. The Woman-Captain (1679) is straight farce, and in its epilogue he irritably acknowledges that he is catering to the tastes of an unrefined crowd: “Remembring how you used that last he writ, / He made this Low, so to your Level fit; / Plenty of Noise, and scarcity of wit” (4:17).

Shadwell as a Carolean satiric playwright is variously farcical and straitlaced, clearly tending toward moralism but acutely aware of audience preferences and willing to moderate his tone. He well comprehends the enthusiasm for sex comedy, and a year after denouncing such lewd amusements in the preface to The Humorists, he delivers one with great success in Epsom-Wells. He is prepared to be bawdy, though he consoles himself (as in The Virtuoso) by passing judgment on the genre even as he stages an energetic exemplar. He wants to moralize, tries to do so, and cannot sell it to a Carolean audience. Shadwell’s focus on sympathetic characters in his later plays—The Squire of Alsatia and

98 Bevis, English Drama, 92.
beyond—is largely a return, as Hume has argued, “to the quasi-exemplary method he had touted” twenty
years earlier. Nevertheless, these later works tend to be shriller and preachier, their central point more
strongly didactic.

In exemplary satiric comedy like *The Squire of Alsatia* the emphasis is upon representation of
positive models, though negative ones are bluntly presented. The point, for Shadwell and others, is more
what is good than what is reprehensible. In the prologue to *Squire*, Shadwell praises his predecessor,
“Master Ben,” a signal that he regards the play as a satiric comedy, and he insists that his aim is “to
correct, and to inform,” as well as to entertain (4:204; italics reversed). The basis of *The Squire of Alsatia*
is the contrast of town and country educations, and of the morality (or not) of their products, in this case
two brothers. Shadwell’s preferences are made plain from the start: in the dramatis personae, Belfond
Senior is described as “leud” and “abominably vicious,” having been reared by his “most sordidly
covetous, clownish, obstinate, positive and froward” father in the country; the younger brother has been
brought up in town by his upstanding merchant uncle, and he is clearly mischievous but essentially a
decent fellow, “a man of Honour and of excellent disposition and temper” (4:206). The country education
has turned the elder brother into an obnoxious swine; toward the younger brother we are meant to be
sympathetic, whatever his failings. When we meet Belfond Junior, he has just seduced a kind-hearted
virgin, whom he later dumps, and he is being aggressively pursued by his cast-mistress, who is raising his
child and cursing his cruelty. His harsh dismissal of her—“if a man lies once with a Woman is he bound
to do it for ever?” (4:228)—should be cause for satire. We expect Shadwell to be targeting both systems
of education, revealing both the town and country guardians as failed mentors who have been sorely
deceived by their errant charges.

Shadwell does not, however, do what we expect him to do. His scorn for the ways of the country
is unmitigated, but Belfond Junior turns out to be the hero of the play. His uncle shells out huge sums of
money to the cast mistresses, thereby setting the situation aright, and Belfond himself is at last compelled

99 Hume, “‘The Change in Comedy’: Cynical Versus Exemplary Comedy on the London Stage, 1678-
to reformation by his love for the praiseworthy Isabella, to whom he swears a solemn oath in the final scene: “I have been so sincere in my Confessions, you may trust me; but I call to Heav’n to witness, I will hereafter be entirely yours. I look on Marriage as the most solemn Vow a Man can make; and ’tis by consequence, the basest Perjury to break it” (4:279). A rakehell he most definitely has been, but the point of the play is not his mischief but his *reclaimability*, presumably made possible by his town upbringing. Shadwell upholds both Belfond Junior and his guardian as overtly exemplary figures—*they* represent the picture of fine gentility—and he does so with strong moral conviction. What makes the play’s conclusion so remarkable is the seriousness with which Shadwell clearly means us to take his protagonist’s transformation. In *Squire*, as in *The Scowrers* and *The Volunteers* (1692), Shadwell’s emphasis is on the capacity for reform. Converted by the love of good women, sowers of wild oats mature into the upstanding gentlemen that they have been, in their essences, all along.

Shadwell is not Steele: the latter would never feature a hero who dishonestly seduces, promptly ditches, and shamelessly pays off a sweet middle-class girl. But *Squire* definitely represents Shadwell’s “attempt to alter the type and tone of the comedies whose elements it freely utilizes,” and *Bury-Fair*, *The Scowrers*, and *The Volunteers* likewise present us with models of probity and morality, contrasted with a wide array of fools and cads. He clearly conceived of those three plays as satiric enterprises, claiming in the prologues to be exposing vice justly and humorously. *The Volunteer* appeared posthumously, with a second prologue, written by Durfey, insisting that the play would please “all you that can good Satyr bear.” The epilogue is a sort of elegy for Shadwell, who is manifestly regarded as a comic satirist of the stage, “Born to expose the Follies of the Age: / To whip prevailing Vices, and unite / Mirth with Instruction, Profit with Delight” (5:159, 161; italics reversed). Shadwell definitely saw himself and was seen as a satirist—despite also being a moralist and a dramatist. He is not the only such writer. Other playwrights of the early nineties combine satire with ethical preachment, satiric butts with moral exemplars, as does Crowne in *The English Frier* (1690) and Durfey in *Love for Money* (1691) and

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100 Hume, *Development*, 86.
The Campaigners (1698). Such satire is far removed from the attack-based modes privileged by modern scholars: Shadwell bluntly ridicules Belfond Senior and his cloddish father, but The Squire of Alsatia would be badly described in terms of that disapproval. It represents a distinctly positive satiric enterprise.

Exemplary comedy was on the rise in this period, but the truly successful satiric drama of the 1690s is “hard” rather than “soft” comedy. A great deal of the weighty satire focuses on marriage. The inadequacies of romance comedy—in which boy gets girl and the play ends on the expectation of everlasting bliss—become increasingly clear at the end of the century, as evidenced in Durfey’s The Richmond Heiress (1693). The central action of the plot is the attempted courtship of the heiress, Fulvia, by a number of suitors looking to score a fortune. When she discovers that even the hero-apparent courts her for purely mercenary reasons, she renounces marriage altogether: “Since such a general defect of honesty corrupts the Age,” she proclaims definitively in the final act, “I’ll no more trust Mankind” (63). While such a resolution is hardly cheery, one must admit that, in the circumstances, Fulvia’s judgment is sound. John McVeagh rightly suggests that the ending is “a dramatic rather than a moralistic stroke,” that Durfey’s motive is “to engineer a theatrical coup, not to expound a reformist programme.”

That said, his satire does attest to a rising awareness of just how unattractive matrimony is for women—and most of the truly first-rate drama in the 1690s and early 1700s confronts and sometimes sharply criticizes the economic bases for matrimony, the near-total subjugation of women in marriage, and the social and legal realities that deny them a way out. Such satires tend to fall into two groups: (1) “happy”-ending plays, in which the author somehow mitigates his satire; and (2) harder-hitting satires that do nothing to diminish the force of the negative commentary. These are not tidy categories, but they do represent fundamentally distinct satiric enterprises.

101 In the epilogue to Love for Money, the foregoing play is said to contain “Satyr”; in the preface to The Campaigners, Durfey writes of himself as a satirist and has much to say about satire (see especially pp. 2-3) and particular satires.

Mitigated satire: Cibber, Vanbrugh, Farquhar

Mitigation can be achieved in a variety of ways and to different extents. I include in this category works in which the satire is implied rather than overt (Colley Cibber’s *Love’s Last Shift*); the implications of the plot resolution are neatly evaded (John Vanbrugh’s *The Relapse*); the playwright admits the negatives, but counterbalances them with something positive/hopeful (Vanbrugh’s *The Provok’d Wife*); or the author departs from reality altogether, offering a thoroughly fantastic conclusion (George Farquhar’s *The Beaux Stratagem*).

Cibber’s *Love’s Last Shift* (1696) is something of an oddity, treated here in part because of its connection to *The Relapse*. In the “romantic” plot of Cibber’s play, the dissolute Loveless returns to London, convinced that the wife he abandoned a decade earlier has died. In his absence, the virtuous Amanda has remained loyal to her husband, whom she presumes dead; she has also inherited a pot of money. When Amanda learns of his homecoming, she contrives to “court and conquer him, as a mistress,” and after they sleep together she upbraids him for his past misdeeds and reveals her true identity. In a moment he is a changed man: “Oh! thou hast roused me from my deep lethargy of vice! For hitherto my soul has been enslaved to loose desires, to vain deluding follies, and shadows of substantial bliss: But now I wake with joy, to find my rapture real.—Thus let me kneel and pay my thanks to her, whose conquering virtue has at last subdued me” (106). All tenderness and mercy, Amanda forgives him—and then informs him that she has been left a sizeable fortune, of which he is now “the undisputed master” (107). The sudden and total conversion of the seemingly unprincipled Loveless constitutes a splendidly moral piece of feel-goodism, and for it *Love’s Last Shift* was long regarded as the first sentimental comedy. If, however, one calls to mind the rakish author’s biography, one is likely to see the piece as an over-the-top burlesque of reform comedies. No doubt some people were pleased to believe the sincerity of Loveless’s transformation—but that a libertine realist like Cibber penned this improbable conversion with a straight face seems inconceivable. He is in all likelihood spoofing rake-reform plays,

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103 All references to *Love’s Last Shift* are to *The Plays of Colley Cibber*, vol. 1, ed. Timothy J. Viator and William J. Burling (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2001). This quotation is at p. 72.
as well as poking fun at sniveling sentimentalists who accept Loveless’s volte-face as true and take comfort in it.

The satire in The Relapse (1696), Vanbrugh’s sequel to Love’s Last Shift, functions very differently. The story begins with the newly reunited Lovelesses gushingly discussing their joyous reunion, but the scene is not all sweetness and light: Amanda distrusts Loveless’s conversion, and her insecurity is well-founded. He cheats on her again in short order, this time with her confidante; she is propositioned by the fine young gentleman, Worthy, but turns him down, and we see no more of that plot. The “romance” of the secondary plot is distinctly sour. Young Fashion marries the rustic Hoyden, the intended bride of his obnoxious older brother, Lord Foppington (Sir Novelty Fashion from Love’s Last Shift), getting her attendant fortune as well. Thus Young Fashion cops the loot, but Lord Foppington’s ironic congratulation suggests that Hoyden is a high price to pay for the money: “you have Marry’d a Woman Beautiful in her Person, Charming in her Ayrs, Prudent in her Canduct, Canstant in her Inclinations, and of a nice Marality, split my Wind-pipe.” Vanbrugh is ironically skeptical about Loveless’s alleged reform, and he deflates the rapture of winning a great heiress. The satire is wry, mitigated by Vanbrugh’s not calling much attention to either couple’s bleak future. Amanda is trapped in a thoroughly depressing situation, but we are not forced to think much about it. As a piece of social commentary, The Relapse is dark without being heavy-handed. Vanbrugh softens his satire by refusing to make the implications of his plot explicit.

In The Provok’d Wife (1697), Vanbrugh’s satiric presentation of marital discord is again mitigated, but not by evasion. In the main plot, Sir John Brute behaves abominably to his wife, and neither is contented with the union. Lady Brute fantasizes about cuckolding her barbarous mate: “Lord

104 For a long time critics insisted that The Relapse represents a stinging satiric rebuke of Cibber and the ethos of Love’s Last Shift, though Cibber’s enthusiastic participation as Lord Foppington suggests that this is not the way he perceived it. Vanbrugh might well be satirizing dramatic conventions that offer false solutions to insoluble problems, but he could just as likely be needling Cibber playfully rather than critically.

what fine notions of Virtue do we Women take upon the Credit of old foolish Philosophers. Virtue’s its own reward, Virtue’s this, Virtue’s that—Virtue’s an Ass, and a Gallant’s worth forty on’t” (117).

Unable to please her husband and intensely aggrieved, she flirts with and almost succumbs to Constant—who sincerely loves her, and who eventually threatens Sir John into a promise to reform. In the other plot, Lady Brute’s niece Bellinda falls for Heartfree, whom she resolves to marry although he does not have much money. For them, the ending is presumably happy; unlike Southerne in The Wives’ Excuse, Vanbrugh suggests that a good marriage is possible. He counterbalances his picture of gross marital discord with the presentation of a pair of sober, decent, well-matched lovers, and so prevents The Provok’d Wife from being as intensely unpleasant as The Wives’ Excuse—though the fact remains that for Lady Brute there can be no very good future.

Farquhar’s The Beaux Stratagem (1707), like The Relapse, includes potentially serious social satire that is implicit rather than explicit. Again we are shown a gruesomely unhappy married couple, but in the end Farquhar offers a fairy-tale plot resolution that could not satisfy any thinking viewer or reader. The Sullens are mismatched—“we are,” laments Mrs. Sullen, “united Contradictions” (176)—and each is displeased by the other.106 Cast as he was in the original performance, Sullen was evidently meant to be not simply a dim yokel but a scary menace.107 The beaux are Archer and Aimwell, respectively attempting to seduce Mrs. Sullen and woo wealthy Dorinda. In the final act, Farquhar merrily unites one couple and splits another, courtesy of an improbable conversion and a handsome piece of illegality. Aimwell confesses his mercenary stratagem to Dorinda, wins her with his belated honesty, and is then promptly rewarded with news of his brother’s death, giving him the title to which he had been pretending. In the other plot, Sullen is ultimately blackmailed out of his wife’s fortune and resolves that they will “divorce.”

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107 Milhous and Hume, Producible Interpretation, 298-99.
What does this fantasy-solution do to Farquhar’s satiric commentary? Viewers would have understood the implausibility of the tidy resolution. Divorce was not only uncommon; it was all but unheard of and legal only in special circumstances at vast expense. Farquhar waves a magic wand, giving us “a satire subtle enough not to offend those members of the audience determined to take the happy ending straight.” Perhaps he is simply backing off to make his satire more palatable—eager to highlight the nastiness of the social and legal realities of marriage, and to underscore (indirectly and sans moralistic tub-thumping) the need for a solution. Audience reception depends heavily upon production choices. If Sullen is played (against the text) as a clown, then the piece could be performed and enjoyed as a comic farce; if Sullen is a barbaric and potentially dangerous thug, then the finale can do little to diminish the grimness of Mrs. Sullen’s fate. For someone aware of or willing to reflect upon the absurdity of the illegal “divorce,” Farquhar’s magic could not have been very convincing. For an unhappily wedded female it could only have been a bitter mockery. In these instances, the complete illegality of the plot’s “solution” serves as a crunching reminder that in the real world Mrs. Sullen’s problem is just not soluble.

Harsh social satire: Congreve and Southerne

Cibber, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar produce very different satires, and the “meaning” of Love’s Last Shift, The Relapse, The Beaux Stratagem, and The Provok’d Wife depends heavily upon production choices and audience viewpoint. In all cases, a theatre-goer so inclined might manage to ignore the implications of what the playwright is presenting. Disregarding the gloomy prospects for Mrs. Sullen requires a greater effort than does overlooking the expected disappointment of Cibber’s Amanda, but none of these writers

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109 Milhous and Hume, Producible Interpretation, 316.
110 Farquhar had clearly thought seriously about divorce; his debts to Milton’s divorce tracts were pointed out long ago by Martin A. Larson in “The Influence of Milton’s Divorce Tracts on Farquhar’s Beaux’ Stratagem,” PMLA 39 (1924): 174-78. See also Eric Rothstein, George Farquhar (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1967), 147-49.
insists that viewers confront the dire future of his protagonists. Such is not the case with Congreve and Southerne, whose romance/marital discord plays are forceful expositions of incontrovertible social problems.

Congreve’s *The Way of the World* (1700) is a dourly critical presentation of the upper-class, leisured part of the London world in which people do not behave decently. The satire on Lady Wishfort is savage, but Congreve does not take a cheerful view of any of the characters. The two male leads (Mirabell and Fainall) are not collaborators and confidantes but bitter enemies; they feign friendship but are rival plotters in a series of stratagems. Mirabell is in love with and wants to wed Millamant, niece of Lady Wishfort—but he also covets her fortune, the £6,000 that she gets only if her aunt consents to her marriage. But (of course) Lady Wishfort loathes Mirabell and refuses to sanction the union. Meanwhile, Fainall and his paramour seek to thwart Mirabell’s plans, and to see that the £6,000 is transferred not to Millamant but to Arabella—at which point Fainall would control it. The subsequent schemes are many and complicated. At the play’s end, Mirabell is triumphant, winning the girl and her ample fortune. The point of the play, however, is not the happily-ever-after that the right union ought, in a romance comedy, to produce.

*The Way of the World* is neither romantic nor sentimental in its attitude toward love and marriage. The action of the play is driven almost entirely by the £6,000, and the proviso scene (IV.i) suggests nothing if not that matrimonial felicity requires more than love. Millamant names her conditions (“Good Mirabell don’t let us be familiar or fond, nor kiss before folks”) and assures him that, if he meets her demands, she “may by degrees dwindle into a Wife” (450).111 He agrees to her terms, and is quick to offer his own: “Imprimis then, I Covenant that your acquaintance be General; that you admit no sworn Confident, or Intimate of your own Sex; No she friend to skreen her affairs under your Countenance and tempt you to make tryal of a Mutual Secresie” and so on (451). Millamant disdains the “Odious proviso’s” (452), but the two have clearly come to an agreement, and the implication, Bevis says, is that, 

“Intelligent people will approach marriage pragmatically, seeking a modus vivendi.” The seriousness with which Congreve takes “marital, legal, and financial issues is characteristic of the 1690s,” he continues, “yet nowhere before Mirabell and Millamant do they receive such a frank premarital airing.”

The two young lovers ultimately achieve the union they jointly seek—but our excitement over the prospect of wedded bliss is muted by the icy realism with which the whole affair is presented.

Whatever the “rightness” of the ending, Congreve’s tone is dark and the implication is that a great deal remains wrong in the play. The sympathy with which he had treated the lovers in Love for Love is noticeably absent here; the detachment with which he had surveyed human weaknesses in The Old Batchelour is gone. Congreve was never a sunny optimist, but in The Way of the World he becomes, as the title suggests, pessimistic. Self-interested dissimulation is a fact of life; the high-life society he renders (however unrealistically) is “a selfish, combative one, in which personal survival depends on skill in deception, and in which one’s status is ultimately a matter of how adept one is in enlisting other people’s energies in the cause of one’s own advancement.”

That a viewer could in fact take consolation in the denouement is highly unlikely. Congreve’s romance comedy is patently dubious and anxious, and he does not really allow for even a partially positive interpretation of a glumly cynical play.

Southerne’s The Wives’ Excuse (1691) is less a gloomily pessimistic than a violently angry satiric play, depicting not an unromantic courtship but a gruesomely unpleasant marriage. John Harrington Smith rightly calls The Wives’ Excuse “one of the five most considerable” plays of the late seventeenth century.

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112 Bevis, English Drama, 153-54.
114 Southerne’s The Maid’s Last Prayer (1693) is a slightly watered-down version of The Wives’ Excuse: an equally rigorous satire on high society, it did not at all appeal to its audience. Southerne shows us marital discord (in Captain Drydrubb and Siam), but the central action of the play is Mrs. Wishwell’s prostituting Lady Malepert to Sir Ruff Rancounter. Lady Malepert, meanwhile, wants to sleep with Gayman, who manages to take Sir Ruff’s place in an assignation (to Lady Malepert’s immense delight). In The Wives’ Excuse, Southerne presented predatory males taking advantage of women; The Maid’s Last Prayer, as Robert Jordan and Harold Love point out, “counterbalances this by offering a picture of the ways in which women can manipulate their society, and trade upon the feelings of men.” See The Works of Thomas Southerne, ed. Jordan and Love, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 1:364. All references to The Wives’ Excuse are to this edition.
A theatrical failure in 1691, it is a complicated, sober, and sour piece of satiric commentary, dwelling harshly on the wretched lot of unhappily married women. The husband, Friendall, is a repulsive and contemptible oaf who married the honorable and well-meaning Mrs. Friendall only to get her money and to seduce her friends. She is abused, neglected, and despondent, but also determined not to think the worst of her spouse: “He does many things, he shou’d not do,” she says in Act I, “but I think he loves me, and that excuses him to me” (1:284). She is tenaciously pursued by the rake Lovemore, eager to get her into bed, but she doggedly resists his advances, pledging virtue and undying loyalty to her loutish husband. In the play’s finale, she catches Friendall in flagrante delicto with one of her friends, but he does not exactly wax remorseful. Unabashed, he observes that both parties have been badly disappointed—the marriage “is not the condition you expected; nor has it the advantages I propos’d”—and he decrees that they will separate (1:339). He will be even freer to philander, but her position is dismal and she knows it: “I must be still your Wife, and still unhappy” (1:340).

*The Wives’ Excuse* is a thoroughly negative play. Matrimony pleases no one, but for women it is a nightmare. Not for nothing does one character suggest that “the Woman shou’d cheat the Man, as much as she can, before Marriage, because, after it, he has a Title of cheating her, as long as he lives” (1:297). Southerne does not seem to believe that a good marriage is possible: humans are by nature predatory, and the two characters who “try to believe in rules,” as Milhous and Hume observe, “look foolish for doing so.” Like Otway before him, Southerne depicts a sickeningly debased society in which insensitivity and disloyalty are the norms. If one expects to be treated decently or to find joy in such a world, one can only be, as Mrs. Friendall is, disappointed. We are not meant to sympathize with Mrs. Friendall any more than we are with Mrs. Sullen—Southerne’s satire, like Vanbrugh’s, is provocative and thoughtful, not pathetic or sentimental—but the fact remains that neither wife has much to look forward to. The representation of marriage is overwhelmingly depressing; the indictment of the libertine code that permits men to mistreat their wives, and of the social/legal reality that denies women any recourse, is severe.

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Even more aggressively than Congreve, Southerne rubs his viewers’ and readers’ noses in the nastiness of the world he renders.\textsuperscript{117}

Both Congreve and Southerne coldly survey the ways of the world and find them wanting—but the author of \textit{The Way of the World} is resigned to a reality that Southerne forcefully exposes as unacceptable. Congreve laments but ultimately acquiesces in a world that is what it is; he earnestly distinguishes right from wrong, but he is not trying to make anything happen. Southerne recognizes that change is unlikely: “Our Author does not set up for reforming,” the epilogue to \textit{The Wives’ Excuse} tells us. But his satire is offensive (in the literal sense), denouncing the status quo with ferocity not present in \textit{The Way of the World}. Does he believe in improvement? One cannot be certain. The greater anger of \textit{The Wives’ Excuse} at least raises the possibility that Southerne wanted to provoke change, though the disgust could just as easily signal his awareness that nothing can be done to ameliorate a deplorable state of affairs. Congreve is glum, and Southerne is angry—and the tonal disparity of their plays indicates two distinct satiric enterprises.

The “happy”-ending satires of Cibber, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar share some plot features with each other and with Congreve and Southerne, and all of them present varying ugly situations—but offering Mickey Mouse conclusions to real problems, or ignoring the mess altogether and ending cheerily, is in satiric terms radically different from force-feeding cynicism to the audience. Audience members of dissimilar values and expectations can derive from \textit{Love’s Last Shift} very disparate and even incompatible conclusions. Likewise a theatre-goer might respond to \textit{The Relapse} with “that was fun,” or with “that’s disgusting,” depending upon his or her own attitude or position. \textit{The Beaux Stratagem} could be done as a farce—but \textit{The Wives’ Excuse} cannot, and neither Southerne nor Congreve leaves the viewer much room for alternative interpretations. Southerne in particular writes against audience expectations. His negativity is neither gratuitous nor restrained; he is coldly realistic, as is Congreve. To some degree

\textsuperscript{117} As Anthony Kaufman concludes, “Southerne portrays the wife’s excuse and the wife’s dilemma without recourse to the conventional conclusion which would satisfy the audience.” See “‘This Hard Condition of a Woman’s Fate’: Southerne’s \textit{The Wives’ Excuse},” \textit{Modern Language Quarterly} 34 (1973): 36-47, at 47.
Cibber, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar are realistic—if a viewer or reader wants to think about plot implications—but those three playwrights are much more willing to make their satire palatable to those audience members wanting entertainment rather than stridently pessimistic social commentary.

The end of the century represents a period of intense experimentation in dramatic as in poetic satire, and the ventures go in different directions. Shadwell had tried a version of exemplary satire in the Carolean period, but what he does in plays like Squire and The Scowrers really is a new pattern, more educational and preacherly than anything found in the reign of Charles II. The more serious social satires do not represent a “type” as much as a spectrum from dissatisfied to disgusted, from tentatively hopeful to unremittingly pessimistic, but none of them has many precedents. Southerne’s angry denunciation shares something with the furious social satires of Otway, but he is also addressing a specific issue uniquely central to the satiric drama of the 1690s. Precious few plays have figured in modern satire studies—but much of the most interesting and innovative satire of this period was written for the stage.

V. The state of satire c. 1700

The possibilities for satire change after the death of Charles II. The dispersal of the court circle represents a particular problem: in a world in which daily newspapers full of juicy gossip do not yet exist, a reading public is far less likely to be able to comprehend highly individuated, personally directed satire. Carolean satire had been a largely scribal venture. In the later 1680s and 1690s, satire is increasingly commercial, written and published for wider consumption and for profit. That material change significantly influences—one may safely say revolutionizes—the practice of satire.

Carryovers from the Carolean period exist, and every trend has exceptions, but the overall level of fervor and ferocity of verse satire drops considerably in the later 1680s and 1690s. Carolean satire has an aggressive energy, both in denunciation and in calls for action, that we seldom find replicated in the later seventeenth century. Many satirists in the reign of Charles II evidently hoped to affect the world around them. Far fewer late-century satirists seem to have such pragmatic aims. Post-Carolean writers, on the whole, deal with smaller-scale religio- and socio-political issues; they are more inclined to vent
than their predecessors had been; they often seem to believe that nothing much can change. They tend to write less purposive satire and tamer denigration. Gould and company do not match Rochester’s profound uncertainty or his enraged vehemence. Garth, clever and successful and committed as he was, does not write with the same urgent intensity as Butler, and *The Dispensary* has neither the sting of *Hudibras* nor the bite of Dryden’s mock-heroic lampoon on Shadwell. Late-century satirists are not without passion—Defoe is fiercely committed, and some of the best plays of this period treat marital issues with a seriousness hard to find in Carolean drama. The climatic change from the 1670s to the 1690s, however, is unmistakable.

Extra-literary forces necessitated adjustment and alteration, and late-century writers conceive and use satire differently than had their Carolean counterparts. Scholars have been decidedly unenthusiastic about the results, regretting the demise of Carolean lampoonery and discontentedly awaiting the emergence of Pope. Late-century satires, however, should not be dismissed as poor examples of what is done well by a few earlier and later writers. Some of the material is splendid, especially the plays, but for my purposes what is more important is that the kind of satire practiced in this short period has only tenuous connections to what precedes or follows it chronologically. Satirists of the eighteenth century proper do not emerge directly from the Carolean milieu—but neither are they evolving out of the 1690s. The circumstances that produced post-Carolean satire were to prove short-lived, and so was the kind of work they generated. The radically altered socio-political and print culture conditions of the reign of Queen Anne were to open up a whole new world for satire.
Chapter 5
Defoe, Swift, and New Varieties of Satire, 1700-1725

Characterizations of “early eighteenth-century satire” almost invariably derive from Gulliver’s Travels (1726), The Beggar’s Opera (1728), and the first Dunciad (1728)—which is precisely what I want to avoid in this chapter. Insofar as scholars focus on the first quarter of the century, they usually regard the satire produced then as a promising antecedent to what would happen in the late 1720s and 1730s, a “Scriblerian” trial run. The period 1700-1725 needs to be distinguished, however, both from what precedes and what follows it: the norms of the 1690s rapidly gave way to very different types of satire, and the works produced in these twenty-five years bear little resemblance to those of the next twenty. My terminus ad quem is not arbitrary. I am deliberately cutting off my survey before the appearance of the later-twenties blockbusters. To read backward from those much-studied and easily remembered satires is a mistake. We need to understand what satiric practice would have looked like to an informed observer who did not know what was about to happen.

Satire in the first quarter of the eighteenth century moves fairly abruptly in new directions and takes on different forms than those common in the latter half of the seventeenth. In the reign of Charles II, satire is dominated by personal lampoons, varyingly intense and usually scribally circulated, and by verse and dramatic contributions to fierce political debate. In the years 1685 to 1700, we find some topical political satire but a great deal of relatively tame social and moral satire—non-particularized diatribes against women, jesting tirades against ale, toothless denunciations of greed, and so on. Satire on the 1690s stage is not predominantly political, as in chapter 3; most of the satiric plays consist of mitigated or harder-hitting exposés of social problems. In the first quarter of the eighteenth century, little of the drama has any bite. “Attack” and “defense” continue to be standard categories after 1700 and are therefore useful in this chapter as in the previous two. Beyond that, we find little continuity from the late seventeenth to the early eighteenth century. Changes in socio-political conditions and in print
circumstances contribute to the morphing of old types; new kinds of satire develop for particular reasons around particular events.

The satire produced in the first quarter of the eighteenth century reflects a broader range of satiric purposes than does the satire covered in chapters 3 and 4, and is therefore considerably messier to deal with. To make this material more comprehensible, I want to lay out the seven different types of satiric enterprise covered in this chapter. These do not correspond with the five sections of the chapter but will be prominent parts of each.

1. **Attack and defense.** A number of religio-political satirists attack their enemies, defend their friends, or complain about state affairs. Swift’s satire in this period is often aggressively and grittily political, whether gratuitously destructive (e.g., *A Satirical Elegy On the Death of a late Famous General* [1722]) or practically purposive (e.g., *The Fable of Midas* [1712]).

2. **Warning and instruction.** A less straightforward type of religio-political satire is monitory—written not to humiliate or punish the satirist’s adversaries but to warn like-minded readers. Defoe is the best known of the monitory satirists in this quarter-century; the object of *The Shortest-Way with the Dissenters* (1702), as I read it, is not to ridicule the high-church position but to school his fellow dissenters about the dangers concealed in that position. Much of the cautionary satire in these years deals with issues of dissent and toleration.

3. **Ideological argumentation.** Religio-political commentators in this period sometimes use satire as a form of argumentation or investigation. Defoe’s *Jure Divino* (1706) is a detailed poetic analysis of monarchical government and a satirical exposition of his political philosophy. He asks big questions about subjects’ rights, the bounds of royal prerogative, the viability of passive obedience as a doctrine—and though he divides Right from Wrong, the point of this satire is its argument as much as its final judgment.

4. **Generalized social satire.** Early in this quarter century, social satirists pen numerous generalized plaints, whether flippantly funny (Ward’s *The London Terrae-filius* [1707-08]) or preachily castigatory and moralistic (the anonymous *The Merchants Advocate* [1708]).
(5) **Didacticism.** The previous category includes negative moralistic satire that is heavy-handedly preachy; moralistic satire can also be didactic, aimed not at deprecation but at instruction. Addison and Steele famously promote sympathetic satire, usually contrasted by critics with the retaliatory aggression of someone like Swift. Steele’s *The Conscious Lovers* (1722) is the major exemplary comedy, an earnest attempt to instruct the audience in social and moral propriety.

(6) **Topical social satire.** Social satire—usually generalized in the late seventeenth century—becomes increasingly topical in this period; its practitioners target well-known figures (e.g., Pope) and current events (e.g., the South Sea crisis).

(7) **Social argument and inquiry.** Some social and moral satirists—like some political satirists—write not straight condemnation but argument and inquiry. Matthew Prior’s *Alma* (1718) is a burlesque exploring the reigning philosophies of mind/body dualism, and Bernard Mandeville’s *The Fable of the Bees* (1714) raises momentous questions about social structure. Neither is simply delivering judgment.

Much of the social and moral satire is straightforward, but religio-political satirists have radically distinct target audiences and motives. Some satires are relatively clear-cut demolitions of specified targets, but in many works ridicule or abuse is not the point. The “job” of satire, for a surprising number of its early eighteenth-century practitioners, is not merely clear transmission of judgment.

The two principal satirists of this period, from the modern vantage point, are Defoe and Swift, both prolific socio-political commentators throughout the entire quarter century. In satire criticism, Swift has been almost universally twinned with Pope. He and Defoe are far from politically or socially simpatico, and they write different types of satire for different reasons, but they both very much belong to the world of early eighteenth-century satire. That such dissimilar figures loom so large in a discussion of this satiric culture is some indication of its messiness and multiplicity.

My organization in this chapter is conceptual rather than chronological. I treat the material in five sections. (1) I begin with Defoe, whose satiric aims and techniques are jarringly unlike those of (say)
Pope—but who is almost certain to have been regarded by his contemporaries as the preeminent living satirist of the period. (2) The second section surveys religio-political satire, including those by Arthur Maynwaring, William Shippen, John Dunton, and others. These works are characterized by seriously underappreciated formal experimentation and by several markedly different concepts of satiric purpose (comprising the first four of the seven enterprises described above). (3) In the third section, I cover the less experimentally inclined moral and social satires by Ned Ward, Susanna Centlivre, Mandeville, and others. Much of the drama produced in these years belongs in this category. (4) Section four focuses on the satires produced by the alleged “Scriblerians,” especially Pope, Gay, and Arbuthnot. (5) The fifth section attempts to understand Swift’s place in early eighteenth-century satire, with particular attention to the range of his output and its distance from what we think of as “Scriblerian” satire.

I. Defoe as satirist

Scholars tend to think of Defoe primarily as a novelist, secondarily as a journalist and a topical commentator on politics and economics—but he clearly conceived of himself as a satirist. He signed a number of his works “The True-Born Englishman” after his most popular satire, had quite a lot to say about satire, and wrote some fifty satirical or partly satirical texts over period of almost four decades.\(^1\) Despite of his output and reputation as a satirist, he is lucky to get even a passing mention from modern satire scholars in their discussions of the period. The neglect is unfortunate but not surprising. Defoe’s reputation as a mercenary hack and occasional writer—often addressing non-literary subjects—has led to his exclusion from literary histories of satire. He is not part of the “Scriblerian” cohort, and whatever one imagines “Augustan satire” to mean, his works are a far cry from it. If one is looking for a heavily-

\(^1\) In the revised list of attributions suggested by P. N. Furbank and W. R. Owens, satire occupies a surprisingly prominent place, but whether one accepts their drastically reduced canon (as I do) or rejects it, the fact remains that Defoe’s corpus includes a substantial number of satires. The “ever-swifter rate of attribution continued throughout the first half of the [twentieth] century,” they explain, “culminating in 1960 with the publication of John Robert Moore’s Checklist of the Writings of Daniel Defoe.” The second edition of Moore’s Checklist (Hampden, CT: Archon Books, 1971) includes over 570 works, marking only 15 as uncertain. See Furbank and Owens, The Canonisation of Daniel Defoe (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 2. For the revised canon, see their Critical Bibliography of Daniel Defoe, which de-attributes 252 texts, reducing Moore’s canon by half.
published, often-reprinted, widely-known satirist in the early eighteenth century, however, Defoe’s name ought to be the first to come to mind. We severely distort historical actuality if we regard him as trivial, irrelevant, or uninteresting as a satirist. In his lifetime he was anything but peripheral.

What did Defoe imagine himself accomplishing as a satirist? I have addressed this question at length elsewhere, arguing (among other things) for the remarkable consistency of his concerns and positions throughout his long career as a satirist. Again and again he returns to the same themes—anti-Catholicism, dissent and toleration, and English manners—though the three cannot really be separated. For Defoe, the humdrum events of an individual’s daily life are connected to the political events of the nation, and these are linked with the broader international stage, and all of these are in turn united to the right order of a Christian cosmos. His vision is undoubtedly social and his judgments often moral, but in subject matter his satires are almost always religio-political. His techniques are not as consistent as his concerns—he is sometimes direct and sometimes (as in The Shortest-Way) indirect—and his purposes for writing satire are likewise complicated. In his direct satires, he is varyingly offensive and defensive, as well as didactic. Especially in his indirect satires, his aim is evidently not to condemn or support a cause, but to expose those he perceives as obnoxious or threatening, and to warn those readers with whom he identifies and sympathizes.

*Attack and defense*

Defoe is capable of direct invective, though few of his satires can be well explained in terms of attack. His denunciation is almost always part of a defense of a commitment or a cause he believes in. In chapter four, I dealt with his defenses of William—especially *The True-Born Englishman. A Satyr* (1701) and *The Mock Mourners. A Satyr, by Way of Elegy on King William* (1702; 6d*), where he scorches his hero-king’s detractors in no uncertain terms. He champions William, but his broader cause is the preservation

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2 Marshall, “Daniel Defoe as Satirist.”
3 The best account of Defoe’s involvement in and commentary on state affairs is Furbank and Owens’s *A Political Biography of Daniel Defoe* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2006).
of Protestantism in England, and central to both his politics and his religion is his sense of Catholicism as antithetical to Protestantism. His rejection of Catholicism, absolute in both political and theological terms, pervades his satirical and non-satirical works, as do his concomitant fears of the possibility of Catholic control of England. Both Ye True-Born Englishmen Proceed (1701; sometimes called “A New Satyr on the Parliament”) and The Address (1704) are violent excoriations penned by an impassioned Protestant Whig. In the first, he reviles the Parliament for failing to support the Dutch and to restrain Louis XIV, and in the second he reproaches the Tory-dominated House of Commons not least for “their flirtations with the Pretender.”

Defoe condemns France for political error, to be sure, but the graver charge is doctrinal. In The Spanish Descent (1702) he inveighs against the French, who “mock their Maker with Religious Lyes” (l. 362). He champions the Protestant cause and decries Catholicism throughout his career, as in a 1713 set of ironical pamphlets on the Hanoverian succession, An Account of the Great and Generous Actions of James Butler (1715), and The Danger of Court Differences (1717).

Defoe’s satires on English manners are castigatory—sometimes mockingly, sometimes fiercely—but they are also strongly positive enterprises. His most generalized satires, Reformation of Manners, a Satyr (1702) and More Reformation. A Satyr upon Himself (1703; 1s†), include sweeping indictments of English incivility. In the former, the poet claims to expose the “Shams of Reformation,” the charade of public moderation that only thinly disguises private indulgences (l. 2). In The Conduct of Christians made the Sport of Infidels (1717), the Turkish letter-writer similarly disparages the British Christians who profess religion but lack the moral restraint to practice it in any meaningful way. The scathing attack on the indecency of nominal Christians is wide-ranging, but these seemingly general poems on English manners always have, in D. N. DeLuna’s phrasing, “urgently topical preoccupations,” as well as religio-

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4 Furbank and Owens, Critical Bibliography, 51. As a result of this satire and Legion’s Humble Address to the Lords (also 1704), the authorities attempted to capture Defoe, but he managed to avoid being arrested (Furbank and Owens, Political Biography, 40).

5 Satire, Fantasy and Writings on the Supernatural, vol. 1, ed. Owens. All quotations from The True-Born Englishman, The Spanish Descent, Reformation of Manners, More Reformation, and An Elegy On the Author of the True-Born-English-Man come from this volume.

political import. From Defoe’s point of view, bad manners endanger the Protestant state. Rudeness—especially in the form of anti-Williamite ingratitude—makes men “Rebels to God, and to Good Nature too” (l. 960). A committed Protestant in early eighteenth-century England, Defoe does not make that charge lightly.

Defoe criticizes a society he perceives as irreverent. He recognizes the degree to which society at large has lost its sense of the sacred, making possible (for example) the rise of deism and atheism. These positions, with Socinianism, recur as bugbears throughout Defoe’s satiric canon, and though he devotes no entire satire to attacking them, their advocates appear as frequent objects of his contempt. He specifically rebukes John Toland in several poems, including *Ye True-Born Englishmen Proceed* and *Reformation of Manners*, where Toland is described as “poyson[ing] Souls with his infected Breath” (l. 416). In *An Elegy on the Author of the True-Born-English-Man* (1704), he laments that in the absence of satire, “Atheists may, unmolested, now Blaspheme,” committing the ultimate sin as they “banter the Supreme” (ll. 442-43). As Rodney M. Baine has observed, Defoe “was striving in an age of sensuous epistemology to re-establish the reality of an unseen world,” and throughout his career he satirizes those who disbelieve the supernatural, as in his late-life *The Political History of the Devil* (1726; 5s†). His satires on anti-Williamites, Catholics, hypocrites, and other offenders are condemnatory—but they are at bottom fundamentally written in defense of causes or convictions that Defoe takes direly seriously.

*Instruction and direct warning (aimed at the audience)*

However capable Defoe is of vituperation, his satiric object rarely seems to be simple ridicule or the humiliation of his targets. His direct satires suggest that he is uninterested in making his victims look bad

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7 In *Defoe and the Idea of Fiction 1713-1719* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1983), Geoffrey M. Sill discusses at length the antagonism between Defoe and Toland, the latter of whom “was regarded as a threat by the entire Dissenting community” (see pages 130-36; quotation at p. 130). For more on Defoe’s critique of free-thinking, see Maximillian E. Novak, “Defoe, the Occult, and the Deist Offensive during the Reign of Queen Anne,” in *Deism, Masonry, and the Enlightenment: Essays Honoring Alfred Owen Aldridge*, ed. J. A. Leo Lemay (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1987), 93-108.

to amuse or please his readers. He publicly exposes only such individuals as Henry Sacheverell and Charles Leslie—the intolerant high churchmen he so distrusts—who practice deception on the public. Except in those particular circumstances, he evidently wants to make his victims feel bad, and so he focuses not on public image but on the guilty conscience. In *The Spanish Descent*, for example, he invites the offenders to feel the pangs of their “secret Guilt[s]”: the blameworthy, he predicts, will purge their Coffers and their Consciences, Cursing their *Ill-got Trifles*, but in vain: For still the Guilt, and still the Fears remain. (ll. 208, 216-18).

An often homiletic satirist, Defoe relentlessly emphasizes “shame,” throughout his satiric canon, appealing to private scruples rather than outward dignity. He is neither relishing his targets’ degradation nor trying to reform the morally reprehensible. The distinction is crucial: Defoe writes satire not primarily to rubbish or reform his enemies but to school like-minded readers, both in their own ways and in the ways of their adversaries.

Most readers, of course, appreciate satire only insofar as it exposes the sins of others. As Swift recognized perhaps better than anyone, the guilty reader almost never sees his own guilt being described. But Defoe has a particular sense of audience: his ubiquitous and evidently earnest appeals to conscience suggest that he imagines a properly attuned reader, something like Milton’s “fit audience” (*Paradise Lost*, 7.31). He does not hope to reach those who are impervious to moral reproof, as he explains to personified “Satyr” in *More Reformation*.

> For when to Beasts and Devils men descend, Reforming’s past, and Satyr’s at an end. No decent Language can their crimes rehearse, They lye below the *Dignity of Verse*. But if among thy Lines he would have place, Petition him to *Counterfeit some Grace*, Let him like something of a Christian sin, Then thou’t ha’ some pretence to bring him in. (ll. 630-37)

In Defoe’s understanding of satire, the right reader is he who sins “like something of a Christian,” a reader who is, in other words, capable of self-reproach. As a rigidly Protestant satirist, he appeals only to like-minded readers who can perceive these distinctions and reflect on their own moral lapses.
In his direct satires, Defoe is manifestly concerned with making these distinctions—or, rather, with making these distinctions known. Protestantism and Catholicism represent one fundamentally antithetical relationship, and of course Protestantism itself comprises opposing groups, but the principal pair of irreconcilable opposites is good and evil.

Antipathies in Nature may agree,
Darkness and Light, Discord and Harmony;
The distant Poles, in spight of space may kiss,
Water capitulate, and Fire make Peace:
But Good and Evil never can agree,
Eternal Discord’s there, Eternal Contrariety. (Reformation of Manners, ll. 913-18)

Defoe’s insistence on “Eternal Contrariety” between good and evil provides more than a moral justification for his satire. He returns again and again to the need to distinguish between right and wrong, truth and falsehood—and, ever the occasional writer, he is not merely expounding abstractions. Defoe is intensely concerned about the position of faithful nonconformists in England. He is hardly uncritical of the dissenters, but he is violently skeptical of the high church position as expounded by Sacheverell and others. His conviction that the high-flying divines are deceptive and dangerous, that they have baser designs than their rhetoric reveals, is what prompts him to write The Shortest-Way, where he assumes the guise of a high churchman and proposes the exile or extermination of the dissenters. The Church of England, says Defoe’s speaker, has “been Crucify’d between two Thieves.” “Now,” he menacingly concludes, “let us Crucifie the Thieves.” The obscurity of the high church intentions toward nonconformists made this “an Age of Plot and Deceit, of Contradiction and Paradox,” a critical time in which one cannot always know “Friends” from “Enemies.”

From the beginning to the end of his satiric career, Defoe worries about the danger of dishonesty. Satire, as he understands it, can be used to expose the most pernicious enemy of true

10 Letter to Mr. Bisset (1709), 10.
11 In A Sharp Rebuke From one of the People called Quakers to Henry Sacheverell (1715), Defoe’s Quaker accuses Sacheverell of being too fluent in “Subtilty and Equivocation” (8), and he links subtlety with diabolical cunning in several texts, including the satires Memoirs of Count Tariff (1713), The Quarrel of the School-Boys at
Christians—the wolf in sheep’s clothing. He recognizes that the too-innocent reader can be easily misled by a seemingly harmless speaker—or worse, a seemingly benevolent one. His emphatic differentiation between truth and falsehood must be understood with that in mind. Defoe is concerned about “his” people (sometimes the English, sometimes the Whigs, sometimes the Protestants, and sometimes the dissenters) not recognizing “their” enemy. His direct satires are not “about” the derision of his victims but about the moral, social, and political education of his allies; his indirect satires are not straightforwardly instructive but monitory, and deliberately provocative of anxiety and uncertainty.

**Indirect exposure and discomfiture**

In Defoe’s indirect satires, he seems to mislead his readers, articulating a position in such a way as to expose it. *The Shortest-Way with the Dissenters* (1702) is the best-known instance of his satiric indirection, and I will concentrate on that text in my analysis of this technique.

Much ink has been spilled on the supposed blunder of *The Shortest-Way*. Almost universally regarded as the work of a failed ironist or a too-successful impersonator, it is Defoe’s mimicry of the “incendiary rhetoric of the conservative clerical antagonists of the dissenters such as the notorious Anglican firebrands, Dr. Henry Sacheverell and Charles Leslie.” Modern scholars have been so distracted by the uproar caused by *The Shortest-Way* that we now have a hard time imagining that work without thinking of its consequences for its author. Immediately after its publication, Robert Harley had Sidney Godolphin investigate the text’s authorship, at which point Defoe was not a suspect; Godolphin delegated the job to the Earl of Nottingham, who arrested Edward Bellamy, and Bellamy in turn confessed that he had taken the manuscript to the printer, George Croome. Defoe was named as the

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**Athens** (1717), and *The Political History of the Devil* (1726). Defoe appears to have been, as Furbank and Owens observe, “perennially fascinated by credulity and the ease with which it could be played upon” (*Political Biography*, 145).

12 Scholars have assumed (either implicitly or explicitly) that *The Shortest-Way* represents a turning point for its author, not only in his personal life but in his satiric practices. In later texts, however, Defoe sometimes uses a similar method of indirection. Two of the clearest and most sustained examples are *A Letter to Mr. Bisset* and *And What if the Pretender should come?* (1713). For my analysis of these works, see “Daniel Defoe as Satirist,” pp. 567-68.

author in the *Observator* for 30 December-2 January 1702/3. When the writer of *The Shortest-Way* was identified as a dissenter, the situation became dire. The Church felt it had been parodied, the government worried that the author was trying to incite a nonconformist uprising, and the dissenters themselves were unsure what to believe or whom to trust. The wariness on the part of his target audience would, I suspect, have been welcomed by Defoe—but he obviously failed to foresee how others might react to his pamphlet.

Because of this fiasco, critics tend to assume that Defoe botched the construction: he tried to signal irony but failed to tip his hand sufficiently clearly, and the work was (against his wishes) taken straight. In my understanding, this reading is completely implausible given what we know of Defoe and of his commitments and practice of satire. *The Shortest-Way* is not author-centered satire, and should not be approached with the aim of identifying the “real” position behind the persona, but in terms of judgment of content. What the reader is meant to find in the pamphlet is not a dissenter’s ironic attack on the high church, but instead the threat inherent in the high church position. Defoe is not principally concerned to embarrass the high churchmen, and neither does he simply want to amuse the dissenters with his cleverness. My presumption is that he did not expect readers to find irony in his piece: he meant it to be accepted as a genuine high-flying screed. He wanted to anger and horrify the dissenters, and to unite resistance among them. If the high churchmen were willing to endorse *The Shortest-Way* loudly and enthusiastically, then the greater fools they. I read *The Shortest-Way* not as insufficiently ironic but as counterfeit, an intentional fake not meant to be decoded. Like-minded readers, principled dissenters with whom he sympathizes, are encouraged to see through the dishonesty of their enemies. As Defoe insisted in his defense of *The Shortest-Way*, his “real design” had been to make “other People’s thoughts speak in his Words.” He said much the same thing in *The Present State of the Parties in Great Britain*

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15 I have made this argument at length in “Defoe, Swift, and the Generic Context of *The Shortest-Way with the Dissenters,*” forthcoming.
16 “A Brief Explanation of A late Pamphlet, Entituled, The Shortest Way with the Dissenters,” in *A True Collection of the Writings of the Author of The True-Born English-man* (1703), 437.
(1712), claiming that his intent in *The Shortest-Way* had been to “speak [the high Tories’] Language,” and also to “make them acknowledge it to be theirs” (24). Satiric lying represents Defoe’s efforts not to deceive his enemies, but to undeceive those whom he ultimately wants to help.

Defoe’s technique depends a great deal upon the subject he is addressing. His indirect satires deal almost exclusively with either dissent (as in *The Shortest-Way*, *A Letter to Mr. Bisset*, and *The Consolidator*) or Jacobitism (as in *And What if the Pretender should come?* and *Reasons against the Succession of the House of Hanover*). The use of indirection for these two topics is not coincidental: Defoe identifies in the arguments around these issues the most dangerous sort of deception. Concerning dissent and Catholic rule, the stakes are exceptionally high, and Defoe’s adversaries exceptionally devious. His direct satires provide an ongoing tutorial on gullibility, duplicity, and feigned benevolence. His indirect satires are timely tests meant to supplement those lessons—not to exist independently of them, and certainly not to replace or to work against them.

Defoe uses satire for primarily positive purposes, but his objectives are not always uniform or uncomplicated. He certainly passes judgment—sometimes shrilly, sometimes venomously—but his concept of satire is largely audience- rather than target-based. Defoe’s satiric output is badly explained in terms of aggression and ridicule. He experiments quite a lot with technique—irony, indirection, and counterfeit—and is often writing satire for a very specific audience in an effort to expose his enemies and to provoke unsettledness or anxiety on the part of like-minded readers. As peculiar as this type of satire may seem to lovers of Carolean Dryden or the mature Pope, Defoe is not exactly an anomaly. Audience-oriented satire has a great deal of currency in the early eighteenth century, especially in the realm of religio-political controversy. None of his contemporaries match his range exactly, but they variously replicate some of his rather distinct satiric motives—particular forms of attack, defense, exposure, and provocation. The wide range of satiric objectives makes early eighteenth-century religious and political satire strikingly heterogeneous.
II. Religious and political satire

A high percentage of the “political” satires in the early eighteenth century are, in some fashion, religio-political—satirists have much to say for and against Occasional Conformity, the power and security of the Church of England, and the trial of Sacheverell. The commentary on these and other issues takes a variety of forms. I have organized the material according to its apparently dominant satiric motive, though I recognize that this is a dubious business. Satirists were not choosing off a menu of half a dozen available satiric aims, and few of the relevant works appear to be doing one thing and one thing only—but the religio-political satires of this quarter century take different shapes and reveal demonstrably distinct satiric agendas. How are their authors using satire?

Topical controversy

Only a small percentage of early eighteenth-century satires can be defined as attack, but certainly one possibility for satire is straight derogation, whether personally or politically motivated. Swift’s Tale gets a good deal of attention from satire scholars, but the bulk of his satires in this quarter century are grubbily political—the stuff of anonymous party warfare, sometimes propagandistic and sometimes simply destructive. His Description of a Salamander, The Virtues of Sid Hamet the Magician’s Rod, and A Satirical Elegy On the Death of a Late Famous General (discussed below) are all nasty verse squibs with little practical point but a great deal of destructive energy. They are viciously personal, respectively targeting Lord Cutts (commander-in-chief in Ireland), Sidney Godolphin, and the late Duke of Marlborough. The last is particularly stinging, a mock-elegy defiling the general’s reputation for martial heroism. More clearly than the others, it has broad implications about human wishes and values—but all of these works get their force from personal assault on well-known political figures.

Swift is a master of invective, but many of his contemporaries deal in politically motivated personal abuse. The anonymous The Seven Wise Men (1704) and Shippen’s (?) The Junto (1710) are
character assassinations of several prominent Whigs, sharply pillorying their subjects in turn. Defoe and Tutchin are slammed with monotonous regularity—as in *The Republican Bullies* (1705; 2d), *The Monster: Or, The World turn’d Topsy Turvy* (1705; 6d), and *The Country Parson’s Advice to Those Little Scriblers Who Pretend to Write Better Sense Than Great Secretaries* (1706). A 1711 engraving by George Bickham, *The Three False Brethren*, features Defoe—cross-eyed in the pillory—with Benjamin Hoadly and Oliver Cromwell. Both Defoe and Tutchin were easy targets, and their assailants often delivered their body-blows with sadistic glee. The anonymous poet of *The Monster* indicts the two hacks as enemies of the state: “Both on their Country’s vital Honours prey; / Yet each to Ruin take a different Way,” though both seek to “Draw thousands of the giddy Mob aside; / Then on their servile Necks in Triumph ride” (3). In ubiquity and intensity, the scorn heaped upon Defoe and Tutchin rivals that with which Dryden met in the wake of his conversion to Catholicism—they were widely disliked and fiercely resented pens of the Whig party. Just as the Duke of Buckingham’s blistering mockery of the Earl of Danby was not simply a personal lampoon, so published attacks against politicians and their journalistic mouthpieces have political edge—and can at least potentially discredit the position for which the targets stand.  

Denunciatory political satire in this period, as in the late seventeenth century, is often a form of complaint. *Korath: or the Danger of Schism. A Satyr* (1705; 2d) is a dour poem written against Occasional Conformity, against Presbyterians, and against the “Spurious, Unbred, Mongrel Whigs” (8).

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17 See also William Atwood’s (?) *A Modern Inscription to the Duke of Marlborough’s Fame* (1706); *An Epigram on Mrs. Deborah Churchill being Hang’d* (wr. 1708); Prior’s (?) *Dr. Sacheverell and Benjamin Hoadly* (wr. 1709); and Shippen’s (?) *The Character of a Certain Whigg* (1712). *The Secret History of Queen Zarah and the Zarazians* (1705), sometimes attributed to Manley, includes a great deal of politically-motivated personal attack—especially on Sarah Churchill, but also on John Churchill, Godolphin, Wharton, and others.

18 Other examples include *On the Greatest Victory Perhaps that ever Was or Ever Will Be by Sir George Rooke* (wr. 1704) and *An Acrostick on Wharton* (1710), a clever squib written after Wharton’s management of the Sacheverell trial.

19 Examples include *On the 8th of March 1703/4* (wr. 1704), *On the King of Spain’s Voyage to Portugall* of the same year, and *The Thanksgiving* (wr. 1709), all of which reflect bitterness and utter disillusionment. Most exemplars of satiric grumbling occur in the first decade of the period under review here. A rare later instance is the anonymous *Pasquin to the Queen’s Statue at St. Paul’s, during the Procession, Jan. 20, 1715* (1715), a Jacobite poem expressing violent hostility to the new regime.
The satirist responds to the issues of the day, but evidently not with an eye toward effecting change. His tone reflects not righteous indignation but sorrowful lamentation:

England, unhappy England! Scene of Woes!  
What thy innumerable Plagues disclose;  
I sooner could each single Atome count,  
Belch’d from the Bowels of the fiery Mount,  
And tell the hidden Number of the Stars,  
Than thy Domestick Broils or Civil Jarrs. (5)

This is not an attempt to “cure” schism or to remedy the “Civil Jarrs” it causes; the satirist is grumpily and pessimistically itemizing problems and impugning various factions that are presumably incorrigible and ineradicable. Satiric complaint can be petulantly mournful like Korath or, as in The D[utch] Deputies. A Satyr (1705), very high heat. The author of that poem rails against the Dutch—“Sprung out of Mire and Slime” (6)—and, whether motivated by visceral prejudice or by political animosity, he angrily fantasizes about their destruction. Writers like this one found much to grouse about in the reigns of Anne and George I, but on the whole satire as lamentation is far less common in this period than it was in the late 1680s and 1690s.²⁰

A great deal of early eighteenth-century religio-political satire is propagandistic, often combining offensive and defensive impulses. Satire can be specifically pragmatic, as in A Health to the Tackers and Charles Darby’s (?) The Oxfordshire Nine (both 1705), works evidently meant to influence local elections. Character assassination is often propagandistically defensive. Swift’s desecration of Marlborough in the 1722 elegy is politically pointless, but his 1712 castigation of the Duke had a practical purpose. Marlborough had just been stripped of his position by the Queen in a move that might have caused trouble for the Oxford ministry—chucking a popular hero was a risky maneuver. Swift’s Fable of Midas (discussed below) is an unsparing smear job on a political opponent, and almost certainly an attempt to secure the ministry that Swift supported. Broader in subject is the anonymous The Tacki-

²⁰ Also less common in this period than in late seventeenth-century satire is mere triumphalism, though a few exemplars exist—for example, William Walsh’s Abigail’s Lamentation for the Loss of Mr. Harley (1708), On My Lord Godolphin (wr. 1710), and Upon the Burning of Dr. Burgess’s Pulpit (wr. 1710).
Club: or, a Satyr on Doctor S[acheverell], and his Bulleys (1710), a fierce assault on the high church position. The satirist leaves nothing to the imagination:

    Attend you Fools, your Character is such,
    Vermin of England’s Apostolick Church;
    Proud of those hateful Names, High-Church High-Flyers,
    Which in our plainer English, are High Lyers.

Defoe-like, the satirist rages against the duplicity of Sacheverell and his allies—“High-Church Monster”—in a rancorous diatribe, but to malign the high church in 1710 is to take a stance on current debates and controversies (3). The positives in these works are largely implicit, but the nature of the issues and the intensity of the antagonism suggest that their authors wrote with defensive conviction.

Ward is a much more aggressively topical satirist in this quarter century than he had been in the 1690s, continuing to write lightweight social entertainment pieces but also producing religio-political satire from a high-church position. Howard William Troyer argues that, while Ward was not the sort of pen for his party that Defoe and Tutchin were, he did have a political function: he “disseminated the policies of the growing Tory faction among the lower classes, heaped prejudice and odium upon the opposition, stimulating the rabble to an open expression of their hatreds.”21 Ward returns again and again to the dissenters and Whigs, to whom he gives a sound scourging. The Secret History of the Calves-Head Clubb, or, the Republican Unmasqu’d (1703) and All Men Mad: or, England a Great Bedlam (1704) sear the Whigs. The title page of the former explains that the purpose of the piece is “To demonstrate the Restless, Implacable Spirit of a certain Party still among us, who are never to be satisfied till the present Establishment in Church and State is subverted.” In his satire In Imitation of Hudibras. The Dissenting Hypocrite, or Occasional Conformist (1704; 1s) he fulminates against dissenters and occasional conformists, arguing that “Occasional Conformity is but a Trick . . . a Modern Policy of Republicans and Dissenters, to strengthen their own Factious Interest by weakening the QUEEN’s Party, Power, and Prerogative” (To the Reader, A3r). He proceeds to lambaste Defoe and Tutchin as dangerous Whig

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21 Troyer, Ned Ward of Grubstreet, 90.
incendiaries. 22 Ward is lashing much-lashed targets, but he is also expressing hostility at a level of heat unprecedented in his early satires—and presumably trying to influence popular opinion against his political rivals.

Some satires are more overtly positive, manifestly defensive of a position. Defoe’s True-Born Englishman represents this kind of enterprise. So do some of Swift’s personal attacks, which are at least potentially pragmatic—meant not simply to assail unfortunate enemies but to blacken the causes for which they stand. His responses to Steele’s The Crisis (discussed below) are at once mocking excoriations of Steele and defenses of the Tory ministry. The same combination of attack and defense is evident in several pro-Sacheverell poems from 1710, including The Old Pack, The Westminster Combat, The History of Seven, and The Save-Alls. Or, The Bishops Who Voted for Dr. Sacheverell. The author of the last condemns the men who voted against Sacheverell, but, as the title suggests, he is more concerned to celebrate the bishops who voted Not Guilty. Luttrell’s annotation calls attention to the positive thrust of that satire: “Upon ye Bishops yt were for Dr. Sacheverel, for them.” 23 The much-maligned Duke of Marlborough has a satiric advocate in the closet dramatist of The General Cashier’d (1712; 1s 6d), who depicts a darling general ousted by the Duke during a hard-fought war. The rabble clamors in support of the general, his soldiers refuse to fight without him, and disaster seems imminent until the Duke and the general reconcile and the war is won. Marlborough is not named in the play, but this satirist’s point would have been obvious enough to readers in 1712. Supporters of the Oxford ministry had tried—as in Swift’s Fable of Midas—to demonize Marlborough in public imagination. The General Cashier’d is a counter to that anti-Marlborough propaganda, and its political moral is crystal clear: to remove beloved and effective military leaders is to invite disaster. The function of these propagandistic satires is to uphold a position, not to defame a target.

22 Ward thrashes the Whigs and the dissenters in Hudibras Redivivus: or, a Burlesque Poem on the Times (launched in 1705). Troyer explains that Ward conceived of this work as a long poem to be issued in parts once a month, whose subject would depend “upon the nature of the immediate controversy and the behavior of the Whigs” (Ned Ward of Grubstreet, 90).
23 The Luttrell File, 153.
Monitory satire in the manner of Defoe

In a great many early eighteenth-century religio-political satires, attack/defense is but an incidental feature—the object is not to derogate the target but to warn or advise the readers. The principal audience, in other words, includes those the satirist wants to help rather than those he wants to harm. Defoe seeks to educate like-minded readers both directly (as in *Reformation of Manners*) and indirectly (as in *The Shortest-Way*), and his contemporaries likewise produce both straightforward and decidedly non-straightforward satires. A few Carolean and post-Carolean satirists had written for their friends, whether cheerleading or trying to persuade moderates; especially in the late 1670s, some Carolean writers used satire as a form of warning. In this quarter century, however, monitory satire is a much more conspicuous—and variegated—phenomenon.

Monitory satires in these years tend to deal with a few particular religio-political issues rather than with social or moral ones. The examples mostly date from circa 1702 to circa 1714, and a high number of them address subjects related to church affairs. Occasional Conformity debates in particular incite impassioned paper wars, and the satiric commentary on the issue is often overtly aimed at influencing the direction of the debates, at fostering distrust of the dissenters, or alternatively at inspiring hostile skepticism about the intolerant high church position. As Howard D. Weinbrot has observed, many dissenters were genuinely frightened that the church “would use the strong secular arm of the state” against those “with whom it disagreed”—including them.\(^{24}\) Sacheverell’s incendiary sermons notwithstanding, perhaps the most inflammatory event of Anne’s early reign was the failure of the Tack in 1704.\(^{25}\) The Whigs exulted in the Tack’s defeat, but fears of high church extremism were real.

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\(^{24}\) Weinbrot, “‘Root Out This Cursed Race’: Defoe’s *Shortest Way With the Dissenters* and his Longer Way With Himself,” in *Anglistentag 2006 Halle: Proceedings*, ed. Sabine Volk-Birke and Julia Lippert (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 2006), 7-23, at 7. As Weinbrot also points out, the high church “was equally frightened by the whiggish Dissenters’ presumably genocidal urges against their true holy reformed religion” (8).

\(^{25}\) Frustrated by the defeat of two earlier bills against Occasional Conformity, a group of Tories tried to force a similar bill through the House of Lords by tacking it to a piece of land tax legislation. As Ellis points out, “by tradition the Lords could neither alter nor amend a money bill, but could only pass or reject it outright”—and “rejection seemed unthinkable since this would sacrifice the single most important source of revenue for the war against France.” To the country Tories’ dismay, however, the bill *did* fail, marking (says Ellis) “the momentary triumph of moderation over high church extremism” (*POAS-Y*, 7:43, 70).
Defoe’s unease at living in “an Age of Plot and Deceit, of Contradiction and Paradox” is plain in his satires, and he associates the high-flyers with especially treacherous deception. I suggested earlier that Defoe’s use of indirection to address those subjects is no coincidence, and neither is the fact that the vast majority of this quarter century’s monitory satires deal with those issues.

Direct admonition—in which the satirist says, more or less outright, “don’t do X” or “you can’t trust Y”—is common in these years, though its exemplars take different forms. Each of the tales in Thomas Yalden’s Aesop at Court. Or, State Fables. Vol. I (1702) is followed by a short moral, either scolding the English or warning them about a particular political miscreant or group of miscreants. Attack is certainly part of the enterprise, though the satiric thrust comes from the cautionary messages like the one at the end of Fable XIII, where Yalden foretells that “the Regicidal Breed / Will swarm again, by them thy land shall bleed” (35). The accused, never explicitly named or defined, are unlikely to feel stung—but their mortification is hardly Yalden’s point. The Tale of a Nettle (1710), a high church broadside written in response to the Sacheverell trial, is more preachily monitory. Its author uses not a fable but a straightforward parable to depict the growth of dissent (as nettle beds) eventually overtaking the once-healthy church. Those already worried that the church was in danger were horrified to find that Sacheverell was being tried for having said as much, and this satirist writes with marked anxiety, ominously predicting in his conclusion, “Thus one nettle uncropt, encreas’d to such store, / That ’twas nothing but Weeds, what was Garden before” (ll. 53-54). Luttrell’s inscription calls attention not to the satirist’s censure but to his solemn counsel: “Showing the dangers of the Church by the Dissenters.”

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26 The quotation is from A Letter to Mr. Bisset (1709), 10. Defoe’s complaints about and attacks on the deception of his enemies recur throughout his career, but see for example A New Discovery of an Old Intreague (1691), Reformation of Manners, a Satyr (1702), More Reformation. A Satyr upon Himself (1703), and A Sharp Rebuke From one of the People called Quakers to Henry Sacheverell (1715).

27 A straightforward admonitory satire of a more particularized sort is A Prophecy (wr. 1703), whose author imagines (as if it were not yet reality) that “Knaves are at the Helm of State” (l. 8). Several satires at least ostensibly claim to be warning the Queen against one group or another; see On the King of Spain’s Voyage to Portugall (wr. 1704), On the New Promotion (1705), Fair Warning (1710), and Found on the Queen’s Toilet (1710).

28 Quoted by Ellis in POAS-Y, 7:388. Another overtly monitory piece is (Maynwaring’s?) An Excellent New Historical Ballad, To be sung at all the Elections in Britain (1708?). The ballad—a warning that the Tories want to bring back the Pretender—was evidently seriously meant as election propaganda, as the title suggests. In
A number of religio-political satirists in these years explicitly warn their readers not to believe everything they are told. *The Lawyers Answer to the Country Parson’s good Advice to My Lord Keeper* (1706) is less about a particular issue, Frank H. Ellis concludes, than about Tory rhetoric. As Defoe’s pro-Sacheverell speaker would do in *A Letter to Mr. Bisset* (1709; 1d), this poet ironically insists that listeners admire the parson’s “High-Church Eloquence” (l. 4). This satirist clearly shares Defoe’s suspicion of Sacheverellite silver-tongued proclamations, of the good doctor’s dangerous “Subtilty.”

*On the Queen’s Speech* is a response to Anne’s proroguing speech in April 1710, an address written by her Whig ministers, who put in her mouth the expression of “unqualified satisfaction at the outcome of the Sacheverell trial.” Although her subsequent actions demonstrated that she did not in fact share her Whig counselors’ enthusiasm, the damage of the speech was, this poet suggests, already done. The satirist rages against the Whig ministers rather than Anne herself, but his depiction of her as “a mimick Queen,” moved by “secret Wire and hidden Spring” is damning (ll. 2, 7). Like *The Lawyers Answer* and Defoe’s *Letter to Mr. Bisset*, this is a satire “about” the possibilities of deception. That the Queen’s language is not to be trusted—she speaks “Words not her own”—is painfully clear (l. 10).

Not all satiric admonition is direct. Monitory satirists often let their targets expose themselves—not saying “X is not to be trusted,” but letting X reveal his or her own treachery. This kind of mock self-exposure is not unprecedented, though it is much less common before 1700 than in the quarter century

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30 Defoe uses the word “Subtilty” to describe Sacheverell in *A Sharp Rebuke From one of the People called Quakers to Henry Sacheverell*: Defoe’s Quaker accuses the divine of “Subtilty and Equivocation, delivering thyself in deceitful Words, that thy People might be deceived thereby; speaking Sentences of doubtful Interpretation, that so thou may’st reserve the Meaning thereof, as might best serve thy wicked Purposes” (8).

In *The Pulpit-Fool. A Satyr* (1707; 1s†), John Dunton denounces several particular clergymen as traitors: the pulpit fool is a “Meer Incendiary.” Dunton’s satire serves as a warning for credulous churchgoers: the pulpit-fool is “a Wolf in Sheeps Cloathing, a profest Enemy to Church and State, hid under Canonical Vestments, that with more ease, and less Suspicion, he might seduce her Majesties Subjects from their Duty and Obedience” (Preface).

32 Maynwaring (?) addresses the same issue—with the same unease—in *The Queen’s Speech* (wr. 1711). This mock-address is heavily ironic, and its author captures the duplicity of the dealings: “To take your Advice I’m no longer afraid,” says Anne, “Concerning a Peace, which already is made” (ll. 8-9).
after it. The level of complexity varies in these works. Some works are manifestly ironic; in fewer cases, self-exposure becomes a thoroughgoing impersonation (as in Defoe’s *Shortest-Way*) whose inauthenticity is difficult to recognize and impossible to prove on the basis of the text alone. I note that *covert* irony is not a strategy often employed: irony can be obvious, hard to discern with confidence, or entirely non-existent, but rarely is it “hidden.” The differences in technique among these monitory satires might signal distinctions in purpose, though the dissimilarities are more a matter of degree than of kind.

The irony in these indirect satires is often readily perceptible, though that hardly diminishes the effect of the satire. Swift’s *An Excellent New Song, being the Intended Speech of a famous Orator against Peace* (1711; discussed below) has the Earl of Nottingham implicate himself as a crooked opportunist. An earlier example, and a more strongly cautionary satire, is Maynwaring’s (?) *An Address to Our Sovereign Lady* (1704; 1d*), a zippy piece with an important point. Ellis describes the poem as “a libel on the Tory majority in the Commons,” which “accuses them collectively of treason”—or which has them condemn themselves. The satirist puts treason in the mouth of the Tory majority’s speaker, who addresses the Queen with an unabashed acknowledgement of his party’s perfidy.

We are forc’d to Invent, in this Dangerous Crisis,  
Some pretty New Whim to Confound their Devices:  
Why Madam, You’re Ravisht, Your Queenship’s Invaded,  
And we must Squeal out till of this You are perswaded. (ll. 13-16)

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33 Carolean exemplars are few (I would include *The King’s Vows* [wr. 1670], *A Dialogue between Duke Lauderdale and the Lord Danby* [1679], and *On Plotters* [wr. 1680]); post-Carolean instances are more numerous, including *The Vindication* (wr. 1688), *The Female Casuist* (1690), *A Trimmer’s Confession of Faith* (1694), and *St. Ignatius’s Ghost* (1700). Early eighteenth- century examples of this sort of impersonation represent a more conspicuous phenomenon.

34 A fairly straightforward example of this technique is *The Modern Whig Dictator: or, the Exultation: A Satyr* (1702), in which the Whig speaker details his crimes and boasts his ability to dupe the nation. Other examples include Joseph Browne’s *To my generous Friend, and worthy Patriot, Harlequin le Grand* (1708) and the anonymous *The Tories Address to King G[eorg]e. A Satirical Poem* (1716), in which the “loyal” Tories expose their duplicity to the new king.

35 Luttrell bought his copy for 1d (his annotation calls the poem “A scandalous Libel on ye Commons in Parliamt”). See *The Luttrell File*, 7.

36 Ellis, *POAS-Y*, 6:615.

37 The anonymous *Switch and Spur: Or A Seasonable Prologue to the First British Parliament* (wr. 1707) is another bouncy but bitey mock-address, this time not to Anne but from her—the Tory author, says Ellis, “imagines what the queen would say if she were allowed to tell the truth” (*POAS-Y*, 7:286). As had Charles II in *The King’s Vows* (wr. 1670), the monarch exposes herself in a brisk survey of alarming objectives. The author of
Maynwaring’s (?) *The Humble Address of the Clergy of London and Westminster, Paraphras’d* (1710, the year of Sacheverell’s trial) features a high-flying speaker who cheerfully details the duplicity of his position.

Thus the Church Bacon’s sav’d, come Whig or come Tory,  
We’ve a Meaning reserv’d, to prove we are for ye;  
We have taken the Oaths and our Livings secur’d,  
Yet ne’er heard of his Claim, whose Claim we’ve abjur’d.  
Sometimes Right divine by Descent’s our Expression,  
Sometimes we cry up the establish’d Succession.  
So that catch as catch can, we’ve engage’d the Caresses  
Of one or the other by our two-fac’d Addresses. (ll. 19-26)

The high-flyer of *The Age of Wonders* (also 1710) just as nonchalantly underscores his party’s treachery, as had the brazen Whig persona of Shippen’s (?) *Faction Display’d* (1704).

These satirists invite readers to apply their scruples to the seemingly innocuous arguments sponsored by their self-revealing speakers. In the controversy surrounding the high church and the dissenters, satirists of the latter group in particular devoted much energy to exposing the falsity of their religio-political enemies and would-be persecutors. A New Ballad Writ by Jacob Tonson and Sung at the Kit Kat Clubb on the 8th of March 1705 (wr. 1705) represents, says Ellis, “a kind of verse counterpart” to Defoe’s *Shortest-Way*. As an effectual solution to the “Tory problem,” the satirist ironically recommends a way to get rid of Tories once and for all: “If St. James’s Scheme, / Be the Cabinett’s Theme, / We’ll Root out the name of a Tory” (ll. 28-30). In this satire, as in *A Great Noise About Nothing: Or The Church’s Danger. A Satyr* (1705), irony is to some extent discernible, and the nature of the threat exposed by these authors is essentially plain.

Upon the Vote that Pass’d that the Church was Not in Danger (wr. 1705) is also anxious about Anne—he is not a disgruntled dissenter, however, but a devoted Tory worried that the Queen is abandoning her commitment to the Church. The four-line squib is defensive rather than condemnatory in tone.

38 Most of the monitory satires involving conformity/toleration issues are written by dissenters (or sympathizers with them) against the high church. An exception is *O Tempora! or, a Satyr on the Times* (1710; 1d), whose author is pro-Sacheverell and anti-dissent.


40 The irony of *A Great Noise About Nothing* is hard to interpret with confidence. Whether the satirist is voicing high-church anxieties (snippily frustrated about the danger to the church going unheeded) or mocking them is not at all clear until the end—where the satirist defines the “Church” as “Persecution” (3). The implication is that what the high churchmen are worried about is not the safety of their institution but the preservation of their
Elsewhere irony is much harder to read. Ellis describes *The Tack* (wr. 1705) as a “Tory coolant”: its author exalts the Tackers as loyal English churchmen in order to counter the Whigs’ overblown charges of the Tackers’ deceit. The satirist surveys the many positive connotations of “tacking”: “The Parsons Work is Taylor like, / To Tack the Soul to Heaven,” and so on (ll. 5-6). Even the Crown and the Church are “Tack’d” together—and so, the poet wonders, “why about one honest Tack, / Do Fools keep such a Pother?” (ll. 21-22, 27-28). Ellis might be correct in interpreting this as a straight-faced (if innocent) defense of the Tories, but we might just as easily take this as a piece of anti-Tack Whig irony, a mock-defense that only further belittles the Tories. Is this a Tory writer deliberately downplaying the seriousness of the issue, or a Whig satirist exposing the vacuity of the Tories’ defense? *A Welcome to the Medal* (1711) is another tricky case: Ellis understands it as an anti-Jacobite poem, but he also observes that some contemporaries took it for Jacobite propaganda. In both cases, much depends on how we read tone and irony.

Swift uses irony and impersonation in yet more complicated ways. His *Argument against Abolishing Christianity* (wr. 1708; pub. 1711) and *Mr. C[olli]ns’s Discourse of Free-Thinking, Put into plain English* (1713) are, like Defoe’s *Shortest-Way*, fundamentally difficult, non-straightforward satires. I discuss both at length below, but for now the point is that Swift uses monitory satire in a fashion similar to his lesser-known contemporaries and on related subjects. The response to Collins in particular belongs to this satiric milieu. As Defoe and Maynwaring mimic/translate the high-church position, Swift “paraphrases” the noxious free-thinker in ways meant, ultimately, not only to undercut Collins but to compel the audience to more critical habits of reading. Just as purposefully problematic are the prerogative for persecution. An angry high-churchman responded with *An Answer to the Great Noise about Nothing: or, a Noise about something* (1705).

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41 Ellis, *POAS-Y*, 7:70.

42 See also Maynwaring’s (?) *The History and Fall of the Conformity Bill* (1704)—another satire addressing attitudes toward dissent and toleration—interpretation of which depends entirely on how we read its irony. More difficult pieces are Dunton’s *A Cat may look on a Queen: or, a Satyr on her Present Majesty* (1705) and *The Manifesto of K. John the Second* (1715?). In the former, a prose satire ostensibly attacking Anne, Dunton combines sarcasm, overblown praise of the Queen, and self-consciously blunt criticisms. Shifts in tone and levels of irony are disconcerting; what he thinks he is doing in this satire, I have difficulty guessing.

43 *POAS-Y*, 7:493.
Bickerstaff pamphlets (1708-09). They are retaliatory against the quack Partridge, defender of the dissenters and antagonist of the high church, but they are also—like *The Shortest-Way*—instructive and cautionary. However funny Swift’s hoax, it does at least implicitly demonstrate the possibility of seemingly authentic lies, the inherent untrustworthiness of print and speech, and the need for the percipient deconstruction of what one reads and hears. The great truth of print culture is that print cannot be trusted.

Either by direct admonition or by provoking doubt, these satirists suggest that readers would do well not to believe everything they are told. The advocacy of healthy skepticism is not for these writers merely an abstract moral lesson—it applies in these years to contested subjects of real practical importance to everyday life. The satires almost always address issues related to toleration and dissent, to Anne and church politics, or to Jacobitism, and the use of irony is closely linked to monitory (not defamatory) satire. That such satire deals with these subjects might suggest that worries about duplicitous high-church eloquence, and about the Queen’s “Words not her own,” is simply a popular trope for dissenters who write satire—but I am inclined to take their fears seriously. In the *Declaration without Doors* (1705), a high churchman reveals his own treachery, swearing that if the nonconformists press for moderation, “We will cut all their Throats” (l. 119). From a dissenter’s point of view, that threat is not just hyperbole.

These satirists, like Defoe in *The Shortest-Way*, are exposing enemies (for the sake of like-minded readers) rather than simply mocking or rebuking them. What makes *The Shortest-Way* so much more upsetting is the completeness of the impersonation; the piece is not *ironic*, the distinction between authorial position and words on the page never really established. I have argued that Defoe’s principal agenda in *The Shortest-Way* was not to embarrass the church but to provoke salutary wariness on the part of the dissenters. The results for Defoe were catastrophic. Because of that fact, literary critics have tended to see *The Shortest-Way* as an anomalous misfire, both an aberration in its author’s career and essentially a misguided precursor to *A Modest Proposal*. *The Shortest-Way* is not well explained, however, as an injudicious deviation from early eighteenth-century satiric norms—it is in fact an example
of a kind of satire common from circa 1702 to circa 1714.

How do the works I am labeling “monitory” function as satire? Partially or principally monitory satire tends to be at least as much audience- as target-oriented. Ridicule is sometimes a conspicuous component of such works (as in Swift’s Excellent New Song on “Dismal”) and sometimes entirely beside the point. Straightforward satiric admonitions are either explicit (see The Tale of a Nettle) or use obvious and stable irony (Address to Our Sovereign Lady); their authorial positions can be determined with some confidence; and the object of suspicion is particularized and made plain. In other words, readers of straightforward monitory satire ought to know of whom to be afraid. Sometimes irony is unstable, and the line between truth and fiction blurred (as in Swift’s reply to Collins)—representing, among other things, a warning against taking words at face value. More complete simulation without irony can be equally upsetting (see Defoe’s presentation of barefaced extremism in The Shortest-Way). Whether the irony is made plain or the satire is less obviously “fictional,” the cumulative effect of these works is much the same. Their authors try to disorient like-minded readers, in productive rather than mean-spirited ways, and/or to alert those readers to the actualities of the opponents’ position. They are not principally concerned to berate or humiliate their adversaries.

What we find in satire in the first decade and a half of the century is a culture of experimentation with technique, of varyingly stable and unstable irony, of audience-centered satire, of obscured authorial positions. In response to religio-political controversy—and especially the debates surrounding the position of the Church and of dissenters—a conspicuous number of satirists rely heavily on impersonation and paraphrase. The use of irony varies, but what these writers produce is essentially a fabrication of the opponents’ position. Again and again, implicitly or explicitly, they translate their enemies’ rhetoric into “plain English,” and however much or little they expose their targets to ridicule, derision is not the principal aim. The object has primarily to do with argumentation, instruction, and warning. These are the satiric contexts to which Swift and Defoe belong. Monitory satire of this sort fits very badly indeed the “attack” and “reform” categories employed by modern satire scholars—but it also represents one of the most exciting developments of satire in this quarter century.
Ideological argumentation: Dunton, Defoe, and others

Political satirists from the mid-seventeenth-century through the early eighteenth century and beyond lampoon their enemies, seek to discredit the opposition, defend their own causes, propagandize on their party’s behalf, and complain about any number of issues or about the general state of affairs. Another type of satire in this period is discrete from attack, defense, or admonition, though sometimes comprising all three. It is primarily investigative, raising important questions or addressing fundamental concerns about the organization of society or government. Dustin Griffin’s categories of “inquiry” and “provocation” are useful here, if not perfectly applicable. He defines satirical inquiry as that which is either genuinely or ostensibly inconclusive: “the satirist writes in order to discover, to explore, to survey, to attempt to clarify.” Satirical provocation is much more negative, he explains, essentially comprising some form of “critique of false understanding.”44 The satires I am talking about here are neither apparently open-ended (most do clearly convey a judgment) nor purely negative.

Early eighteenth-century satirists address the nature and basis of power, not in terms of philosophical abstractions but as topical responses to ongoing debates of the day. Issues of toleration and dissent were a source of stormy debate throughout Anne’s reign, but religious controversialists like Sacheverell, Leslie, and Hoadly were just as concerned with broader questions about obedience and allegiance. When Leslie launched his periodical The Rehearsal (1704-09), he did so expressly to challenge Tutchin, Defoe, Hoadly, and the other Whigs who disavowed divine right and argued that monarchical injustice could be lawfully resisted. High-flyers like Leslie and Sacheverell promoted patriarchy, passive obedience, unblinking allegiance to the divinely ordained sovereign. Sacheverell in particular captured the attention of the masses when he at least implicitly assailed Revolution principles in inflammatory sermons like The Rights of the Church of England Asserted and Proved and “In perils amongst false brethren” (1705). His impeachment in 1710 was a cause célèbre. The meaning and legitimacy of 1688 continued to be hotly contested long after the death of William, and the imminent

44 Griffin, Satire, 39, 52.
Hanoverian succession was hardly unproblematic, especially with the Pretender alive and well across the
Channel. The questions addressed by Sacheverell, Hoadly, and others were very much a part of the
public imagination. Defoe and Tutchin, arguably the best-known political satirists of this quarter century,
were embroiled in these disputes, as were many of their fellow satirists.45

The anonymous *Leviathan, or, a Hymn to Poor Brother Ben* (1710) belongs, at least in part, to
the world of religio-political defamation—but to discredit Hoadly is to challenge a leading ecclesiastical
proponent of contractual theories of kingship. In 1709, Hoadly was involved in a back-and-forth
exchange with the bishop of Exeter, a loud advocate of divine right and passive obedience. Like most
Whigs, Hoadly maintained that Anne was “‘a good behaviour Queen’ . . . appointed by parliament
durante bene placite.”46 This poem ironically refutes those “who blind Obedience pay / To royal
Monarchs’ Princely Sway” and praises the mob as “our Sov’reign Lord,” through which “we are, we live,
and move” (ll. 20-21, 27). To this ruling mass, the poet sings:

From thee all Magistracy springs;
Thou giv’st the sacred Rule to Kings;
And at thy Nod they’re useless Things.
What, tho’ they stile themselves divine,
And would succeed by Right of Line,
There is no Law on Earth, but thine. (ll. 31-36)47

The poet is unquestionably taking a position, and of the satiric judgment readers can be in no doubt, but
this piece is very poorly explained as simply a put-down of Hoadly and his supporters.48

45 A question that might be raised about writing in the reigns of William and Anne is whether there was a
distinct “Whig style.” For a positive view, see Abigail Williams, *Poetry and the Creation of a Whig Literary
Culture 1681-1714* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) and “Cultures of Whiggism”: New Essays on English
Literature and Culture in the Long Eighteenth Century, ed. David Womersley, assisted by Paddy Bullard and
Abigail Williams (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005). My own view is that the “culture” is genuine, but
that it is broadly ideological and does not equate tidily with satiric practice.


47 This is exactly what the author of *The Devil Turn’d Limner: Or A Celebrated Villain drawn to the Life.
With A Satyr against Loyalty* (1704) is worried about. He anxiously grumbles that Tutchin (“the Observator”) and
other journalists teach the people that they can make and un-make kings: “Princes to Thrones it is their Right to
bring; / Thus all Prerogative is only lent, / Whilst they are pleased with their Government” (16).

48 Other examples include Prior’s (?) *Dr. Sacheverell and Benjamin Hoadly* (1709) and *High-Church
Miracles, or, Modern Inconsistencies* (wr. 1710), the latter a bouncy poem whose author is overtly concerned with
very big issues—the implications of passive obedience and a divine right theory of kingship.
Prose satirists like Dunton likewise combine politically motivated invective with dense argumentation about the structure of current politics and the nature and basis of authority. Dunton’s *King-Abigail: or, The Secret Reign of the She-Favourite, Detected and Applied* (1715; 6d) targets Abigail Masham, a prominent court favorite under Anne. In this opaque mock-sermon, Dunton opposes the involvement of women in governing; he grumbles mightily about court favorites; and he suggests that divines like Sacheverell have no business meddling in state affairs. The satire includes a fair amount of pointed hostility, but its real concern is with the principles underlying party politics, prerogative, and the management of the state. Here Dunton reflects on ancient notions of order and authority:

Nor can I think that they were perplexed with the *Roar of the Church’s Danger*, or bully’d into a Belief, that Kings are in Possession of the Crown *By a Divine Right and Commission, which place ’em above the Reach of all Laws and Power upon Earth.* . . . That they are invested with an absolute and Arbitrary Power, over the Lives, Liberties and Fortunes of their Subjects, without any Respect to any Fundamental Laws which protect ’em. That an unconditional, slavish, Passive Obedience in all cases, without Exception, to all the Commands of such Princes, are to be observ’d upon *Pain of Damnation*. That there is an *Indefeasible, Hereditary Right to the Crown*, which renders it impossible to transfer the same from the next in Blood, upon any Pretence, or by any Power whatever. No, *those were Doctrines unknown to former Ages.* (6)

This is hard-going, a universe apart from spirited drubbing of a target. Like the authors of *Rome, or Geneva: or, the True Church of England Without Either* (1717) and *Rightful Monarchy: or, Revolution Tyranny, A Satyr* (1722), Dunton is soberly exploring big questions about political power, not just passing judgment.

Defoe’s *Jure Divino: A Satyr. In Twelve Books* (1706; 15s by subscription; 5s pirated) is perhaps the best illustration of satiric argumentation. Defoe labels the work a “satyr,” and he has plenty to say against high-flyers, Tories, anti-Williamites, and so on—but, as P. N. Furbank points out, “this poem, with its footnotes, constitutes the fullest account of his political philosophy.” Defoe’s contention is

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49 Maynwaring (?) blasts Masham in *A New Ballad. To the Tune of Fair Rosamond* and *Masham Display’d: To the Tune of The Dame of Honour* (both 1708). In the latter, the satirist laments that, though lacking beauty, birth, and sense, she “Yet does controul the Nation” (l. 10).

50 *Satire, Fantasy and Writings on the Supernatural by Daniel Defoe*, vol. 2, ed. P. N. Furbank (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2003), 28. Defoe attempts to prevent an anti-government reading of this satire, insisting in the preface that, “If any are so weak as to suppose this is a *Satyr* against Kingly Government, and wrote to expose
simple enough. Divine right and patriarchal theories of monarchy are dangerously misguided, subjects have the right to defy the command of tyrants, and passive obedience is not only a mistake but a sin. In the last stanza of the introduction, Defoe encourages “Satyr” personified to begin “the Grand Inquiry” (75), and critical inquiry is crucial to the spirit of the poem. In the prose preface, he bluntly raises what he perceives as questions devastating to his adversaries’ position.

Kings, say our Champions of Absolute Power, have their Authority from God, and from him only; of such Gentlemen it would be well to ask some such Questions as these; When they receive this Power? And what Kings are they have it? If all Kings have it, then the Usurper who murthers the Right Heir has it, and Crookback Richard had it, and was King Jure Divino; and what was Henry VII. then? to take up Arms against a Rightful, Lawful Prince, who had his Power immediately from the Most High, and was accountable to none but him? If Usurpers have not this Divine Right, Where then will you find it? And what Nation has a Prince whose Line did not begin at some Period of Usurpation, or in the Injury of the Right of another; or, in short, by some unjust Succession? (39-40)

Jure Divino’s 12 books delve into various related themes—universal self-interest, allegiance, tyranny, justice, power—sometimes inquisitively and sometimes with sharp hostility. Defoe’s numerous footnotes are substantive, directly argumentative, and occasionally ponderous: “Passive Obedience is a Contradiction in Terms; for, if they suffer, it must be for first disobeying; if they obey’d, there could be no Penalty inflicted; if they first merited the Penalty, How could they Obey?” (150n.). Defoe’s satire is a weighty exploration of the role of subjects in a monarchy, and of the nature and basis of kingly power. He, Dunton, and others are not simply rendering verdicts, though they do that. Satire of this sort is less a punitive or didactic tool than a form of “Grand Inquiry.” A modern critic might object that only the denunciatory parts of the poem are satiric, that the inquiry and argumentation are separate, but Defoe evidently made no such distinction, titling Jure Divino “a satyr” rather than “a satirical poem.” Remote Monarchy; I think I should sufficiently answer so foolish a Piece of Raillery, by saying only, they are mistaken” (38). Subsequent quotations come from this edition; page numbers are given in the text.

A similar example is A New Ballad to ye Tune of ye Black Smith (wr. 1710?), the occasion of which is Sacheverell’s impeachment. Ballad form notwithstanding, this is textually dense, as for example:

Says ye Rights of Church & this Teacher Mankind
Are to God & their King by Contract confin’d
Which if it be not Mutuall never can bind
Which no Body dares deny.

The satirist is arguing about divine right and objecting to the clergyman’s interference in political debate. The manuscript is British Library Add. MS 74,211. The other leaves are blank: this is the only piece in the book.
though it is from twentieth-century notions of “Augustan satire,” it is very much a part of what readers in
the early eighteenth century assumed satire could and should do.

III. Social and moral satire

Social and moral satire is noticeably less experimental than religio-political satire in this quarter century.
As in the late seventeenth century, we find in this period a considerable amount of all-inclusive satire or
satire on types. Some exemplars are evidently lightweight efforts at entertainment (à la Ward’s apolitical
satires), and some are exceptionally sober and pompously moral. In dramatic satire in particular, we see
more distributive justice, didacticism, and exemplary satire—the last a category familiar from works like
Shadwell’s *The Squire of Alsatia*, *The Scourers*, and *The Volunteers*. Compared to the late seventeenth
century, more particularized social satire is written in this period, ranging from relatively tame to very
high-heat. Finally, just as early eighteenth-century religio-political writers use satire as a form of
sometimes dense argumentation, so a number of satirists write substantive social commentary that is
explorative as much as or more than it is harshly judgmental.

*Generalized satire*

Generalized satire continues from the late seventeenth century, though the abstract “attacks” on concepts
(e.g., confinement) and inanimate objects (e.g., wine) have radically diminished by 1705 or thereabouts. Thomas Baker’s *An Act at Oxford. A Comedy* (1704) includes satire directed at the university—pointed
enough that offense was taken and the play banned—but the piece is basically a spicy and entertaining

52 A number of satires are highly generalized and written without much evident authorial conviction. For example: *St. James’s Park: A Satyr* (1708); *The Long Vacation. A Satyr: Address’d to all Disconsolate Traders* (1708; 1d); Joseph Browne’s *The Circus: or, British Olympicks, A Satyr on the Ring in Hide-Park* (1709; 1d); *The Way of the Town: or, the Sham-Heiress* (1717; 1s); and *An Occasional Satyr* (1725). A piece like *Martial Reviv’d: or, Epigrams, Satyrical, Panegyrical, Political, Moral . . . And Comical* (1722) is pure frivolity. *Brooke and Hellier. A Satyr* (1712; 3d†) and *The Town Assemblies. A Satyr* (1717) include particular references and even named targets, but the topicality seems to locate the piece rather than to explain it. The former is clever, silly, and totally
without animus; the latter is an equally toothless, sweeping survey of fools and follies.
A number of satires are self-conveying stories rather than negative descriptions or fulminations, such as *A Rod for Tunbridge Beaus* (1701). Some early eighteenth-century satirists produce comic or satiric descriptions of “types,” as in Ward’s *The Wooden World Dissected* and *Mars Stript of his Armour*, humorous pamphlets respectively published in 1707 and 1708, the first attacking the navy, the other targeting the army. Ward’s best-known example is probably *The London Terrae-filius: or the Satyrical Reformer* (issued in six parts in 1707 and 1708), a playful catalogue of London pedestrians. He takes the passersby in turn: “Here comes a *She-Devil* of a *Prattle-Box*, who is so very full of the spirit of *Contradiction*,” he says, “that she never agreed with her husband in any one thing, except in *Child-getting*” (No. 2; p. 33). Ward’s commentary is sometimes sharp or bawdy, but the tone is uniformly bantering. Of a woman past her prime, he cracks, “How now, Old Beldam; whither are you Trotting in such wonderful hast, this fine Morning?” (No. 2; 10). As in *A Journey to Hell*, Ward’s object in these generalized pieces is to divert, not to punish or instruct and certainly not to correct.

Generalized satires in this period are sometimes flippant and entertaining but more often somber and dull—sonorously moralistic versions of the satiric journalism Ward practiced in the 1690s. The author of *A Net for the D[evi]l: or, the Town Display’d. A Satyr* (1705), a work of the “Reformation of Manners” variety, thunders against widespread impiety (“Yet let God’s House be empty as it will, / You’ll see the *Taverns*, and the *Play-House* fill”) and then denounces his readers for hypocrisy: “in Humility your Sins disguise. / Which, in *Plain English*, is but just to say, / Be very *Wicked*, in a Godly way.” He concludes with an uncompromising judgment on his reprobate targets, suggesting that, because the “needful Task” of moral reclamation is beyond the power of satire, something else will have to do: “Ee’n let the D[evi]l come, and cast his *Net*; / One lucky hawl may do the Town more good, / Than all the pains thou [“Satyr”] ever hast bestow’d” (9, 11, 18). The pessimism might be genuinely felt or a rhetorical

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53 The play was revised and performed under the title *Hampstead Heath*. See Hume, *Development*, 463.
54 Other satires on “types” include the toothless *A True Caracter of the Bread-street Tatlers; Or, a Satyr against Impudence* (1707) and the nastier *A Satyr upon Old Maids* (1713).
55 A similar—if less lively—satire is Ward’s *The Modern World Disrob’d: or, Both Sexes Stript of their Pretended Vertue* (1708), which ridicules women (part I) and men (part II). A more concentrated character sketch is his earlier *The Rise and Fall of Madam Coming-Sir* (1703), a satirical depiction of a barmaid.
pose, but whatever the convictions of the poet, this is heavy-going satiric moralism of an exceedingly
general sort. So is The Merchants Advocate, A Poem, In an Imitation of Juvenals XIII. Satyr (1708),
whose author claims in the preface to press readers toward useful and edifying “Moral Reflections.” The
satirist’s supplications are plodding and pedantic: “Hear next almighty Reason. Thus she cries, / That
Man, who best ill fortune bears, is wise” (3). He describes a variety of crimes and sins, gravely
reminding his readers that a vengeful God is watching and noting their transgressions. The poem is all
fire and brimstone, concluding with a sermonic promise of final justice: “Only God can See, and Hear,
and Punish too at last” (20).56 These and similar social satires, like those by Gould covered in the last
chapter, are mostly generalized and sometimes fiery.57 Their authors are rendering moral judgment.

Didactic satire in the manner of Steele

Not all satiric moralists are punitive. “Soft” satire—aimed at moral education rather than castigation—
has had scant critical attention from those who associate satire primarily with aggression. The exemplary
plays of Shadwell are not popular among modern satire scholars, and Swift is an infinitely more
fashionable subject than Addison. The rigidly “pejorative” definition of satire has been rightly challenged
by Matthew J. Kinservik, who points out, for example, that Cibber’s The Careless Husband (1704) was
regarded by its author as a satire but, because of its emphasis on correction rather than punishment, is not
usually treated that way by scholars.58

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56 The Merchants Advocate is a highly generalized social satire, but it is not without topical commentary on
current political events. For a reading of this satire as a response to Britain’s naval strategy in the War of the
Spanish Succession, see William Kupersmith, English Versions of Roman Satire in the Earlier Eighteenth Century

57 See also Parliament of Critics, The Menippæan Satyr of Justus Lipsius in a Dream (1702), Joseph
Browne’s Liberty and Property. A Satyr (1705), A Satyr upon the Present Times (1717; 4d), The Hell-Fire-Club:
Kept by a Society of Blasphemers (1721; 3d), and The Comical Pilgrim; or, Travels of a Cynick Philosopher (1722;
1s 6d). Another example is Belsize-House. A Satyr (1722; 3d), in which the satirist beseeches “Some angry Muse”
to help “lash the Women, and chastise the Men” who reside and/or visit Belsize-House, “a Rendezvous of
Strumpets” (5, 6). The immorality of the harlots and their customers is described at length and with shrill contempt.

58 See Kinservik, Disciplining Satire, 12, and also “Censorship and Generic Change: The Case of Satire on
The loudest early eighteenth-century proponents of reformative satire are, of course, Steele and Addison.\(^5^9\) In *The Tatler* (1709-11) and *The Spectator* (1711-12; resumed June-December 1714), they advocate satire written from a position not of judgment but of sympathy, not hostile in nature but moral and didactic.\(^6^0\) Addison repeatedly objects to those malevolent wits who use satire to punish rather than to correct. “I am very much troubled,” he says in *The Spectator* No. 23, “when I see the Talents of Humour and Ridicule in the Possession of an ill-natured Man.” In *The Tatler* No. 242, Steele likewise stresses the importance of compassion and generosity to true satire. Benevolence is “an essential Quality in a Satyrist,” for

> Good-Nature produces a Disdain of all Baseness, Vice, and Folly, which prompts them to express themselves with Smartness against the Errors of Men, without Bitterness towards their Persons. This Quality keeps the Mind in Equanimity, and never lets an Offence unseasonably throw a Man out of his Character.\(^6^1\)

To pass harsh judgment from a position of superiority is to do little more than libel or lampoon. The proper satirist is not judge but fallible teacher—amiable, ultimately sympathetic, and himself not beyond moral reproach. Satire’s tone should be sober but forgiving, the objective not reproof but improvement.

Addison and Steele are not the only early eighteenth-century advocates of benevolent satire. Charles Johnson’s *The Wife’s Relief; or, The Husband’s Cure* (1711) is a slow-going reform comedy—like Centlivre’s *The Basset-Table* (1705), though Johnson is more somberly preachy than Centlivre.\(^6^2\)

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\(^5^9\) Addison and Steele are in fact not identical satirists. In the *Spectator*, Bond explains, “Steele’s point of view is generally more serious and straightforward, Addison’s marked by greater variety and a spirit of comedy.” For example, “the high ethical purpose of Steele’s four critical papers on the drama—on ‘Sir Fopling Flutter’ (65), ‘The Scornful Lady’ (270), ‘The Distressed Mother’ (290), and Terence’s ‘Self-Tormenter’ (502)—may be contrasted with Addison’s high-spirited series on the absurdities of Italian opera (5, 13, 18, 29, and 31).” See *The Spectator*, 1:lx.

\(^6^0\) Kinservik’s discussion of Steele and Addison’s program for satire is among the best; his emphasis is obviously on the ways in which this new notion of satire appears in drama. See “Censorship and Generic Change,” especially pp. 273-78.


\(^6^2\) On Johnson as satiric playwright, see Kinservik, *Disciplining Satire*, 46. The plot of *The Basset-Table* is as follows: Lord Worthy tries to reform Lady Reveller, a gambler and a coquette; the prim Lady Lucy seeks to reclaim the rowdy Sir James Courtly. A shopkeeper’s wife, Mrs. Sago, is sharply satirized for living beyond her means. She, Lady Reveller, and Sir James are all finally converted to propriety by the end of the play: the two couples unite (though Lady Reveller gives up gaming only after a mock-rape staged by Worthy), and Mrs. Sago grudgingly renounces her social climbing. The reformations of the gamblers and of Mrs. Sago are nicely moral, though *The Basset-Table* is more a comedy of manners than a piece of stodgy didacticism.
The Wife’s Relief centers on the imperfect union of an unfaithful scoundrel named Riot and Cynthia, the devoted wife of unimpeachable morals who hopes to “mend” her wayward husband (28). Little interested in being mended, Riot is raring to have sex with Cynthia’s cousin Arabella, who is actually in love with his confidante Volatil. He beseeches his wife to help convince Arabella that this would be a good thing. Intrigue follows. Cynthia and Arabella plot against Riot: Arabella plans an assignation with him, Cynthia takes her place, and Volatil contrives to swap roles with Riot—and then promptly reports the lusciousness of his (feigned) rendezvous. “I have had Women before,” Volatil boasts, “but never, never so delicate a Skirmish” (62). When Riot discovers that Cynthia traded places with Arabella, he imagines to his horror that he has been cuckolded. The schemers eventually confess their jest, and (hey presto) the errant husband becomes his better self, vowing to Cynthia, “my future Life shall pay the mighty Debt I owe thy Virtue” (86). Like Belfond Junior’s conversion in The Squire of Alsatia, but unlike Loveless’s in Love’s Last Shift, we are clearly meant to take this seriously. In the epilogue, Johnson makes the moral yet more perfectly plain: he urges “Ye Riots in the Pit” to “Reflect, Reform: Go to your several Houses, / And from this very Moment—Love your Spouses” (87). The prologue stresses the author’s empathy: “. . . he laughs and mourns,” and “Feels the very Characters he Paints.” The virtuous (like Cynthia) are very virtuous, and even the badly behaved Riot is, above all, reclaimable. Johnson is not simply judging the naughty male lead and, by implication, his real-life counterparts: he is educating them in their own capacities for decency.

Steele’s The Conscious Lovers (1722) is the classic exemplary comedy, and also his most thorough-going attempt to instruct the audience in proper social mores. In the prologue, Steele employs language drawn from the terminology of the satiric theory of the day (language picked up in the twentieth century by critics like Mack). He announces that he wishes to “please by Wit that scorns the Aids of Vice,” so that he may function as “the Champion of . . . Virtues.” The point of the play, as one contemporary put it, was “to move the Audience to the Suppression of Vice, by presenting ’em with such
a Worthy Noble Character as Bevil.”

Bevil Junior, and his eventual bride Indiana, are Steele’s unequivocal models of politeness and respectability; draft titles for the play included “The Gentleman” and “The Fine Gentleman.” In the most famous scene, this well-mannered youth refuses to duel with his friend—“I have, thank Heaven, had time to recollect my self”—after which the two reconcile, becoming “Dearer Friends than ever” (IV.i.167, 207-08). Theatre-goers reportedly burst into tears, presumably benefiting from the moral lesson.

The social/ideological division in The Conscious Lovers is represented by Sir John Bevil (a Tory gentleman) and Mr. Sealand (a Whig merchant). Following John Loftis, scholars long understood Steele to be celebrating the latter at the expense of the former, though he in fact commends and criticizes both groups, and the hero of the play is a country heir rather than a city merchant. Ideological interpretation of Steele’s comedy is not an altogether simple matter. Mark S. Dawson—an historian, not a literary critic—has challenged the notion that The Conscious Lovers represents “a more moralistic drama which, responding to the rise of bourgeois sensibilities, presented upper-middling Londoners with an uncompromisingly positive representation of themselves and their social position.” Dawson denies the legitimacy of “this narrative of socio-cultural change,” encouraging a more nuanced understanding of attitudes toward and dramatic representations of class.

Even if a new type of sentimental comedy did come to chide ‘aristocratic’ or ‘genteel’ standards of behaviour and offer something more improving in its place, we must not assume either an equally straightforward, parallel rejection of aristocracy or gentility as social concepts or, conversely, that any improvement correlates with clearly defined and alternate social group (i.e. a bourgeoisie) becoming newly prominent as both theatrical producers and spectators. (44)

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64 The Plays of Richard Steele, ed. Shirley Strum Kenny (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 277. All quotations of the play are from this edition; the previous quotations are at pp. 303 and 304.
65 Loftis, Comedy and Society from Congreve to Fielding (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959), 83-86. As Hume points out, however, The Squire of Alsatia “is if anything a stronger argument for Whig ideology than The Conscious Lovers (however defective we think Shadwell’s morality).” See “The Socio-Politics of London Comedy from Jonson to Steele,” forthcoming.
66 Dawson, Gentility and the Comic Theatre of Late Stuart London, 27-28. The over-simplistic interpretations Dawson is critiquing, he rightly points out, “rely on a priori dichotomies, aristocracy versus bourgeoisie and feudalism versus capitalism in particular” (44).
Dawson is rightly skeptical about the value of simplistic ideological explanations of *The Conscious Lovers*, but that Steele’s play is strongly ideological is not in question. Steele is making a social argument; he has definite views on gentility and propriety; and he presents his audience with unequivocal models. A much preachier play than his *The Funeral* (1701), *The Conscious Lovers* is an overtly and undeniably didactic satire. What Steele offers is not mere platitudes or a *pro forma* representation of reform—he is earnestly trying to educate viewers and readers in respectable social behavior.

*Particularized and topical satire*

Topical social satire in this period is more conspicuous than it was toward the end of the seventeenth century. The anonymous author of *The Female Wits: or, the Triumvirate of Poets At Rehearsal* (wr. 1696; pub. 1704) goes after all plays by women, and sears Manley, Mary Pix, and Catherine Trotter. *The Lunatick. A Comedy. Dedicated to the Three Ruling B—s at the New-House in Lincolns-Inn-Fields* (1705; perhaps by William Taverner?) satirizes Barry, Bracegirdle, and Betterton. Opera is chirpily mocked in Richard Estcourt’s *Prunella* (1708) and Mrs. Aubert’s *Harlequin-Hydaspes: or, The Greshamite. A Mock-Opera* (1719). The anonymous poet of *The Dancing-Master. A Satyr. Canto I* (1722; 4d) rails against Italian opera and other forms of imported culture, contemptuously branding its producers and consumers “the Dregs and Scum of all the Earth” (4). How much of this is earnest and how much rhetorical performance is anybody’s guess—but this satire is more topical than its title would suggest.

Particularized satire often tends to have or at least to claim broader implication and application. Defoe’s indictments of English civility in *Reformation of Manners, More Reformation, and The Conduct of Christians made the Sport of Infidels* are sweeping, but they too are highly particularized. The targets (e.g., Toland, free-thinkers, Occasional Conformists) are not incidental features or standard butts; they are

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67 John Dennis denigrates foreign influences on English culture in *An Essay on the Opera’s after the Italian Manner* (1706) and in *An Essay upon Publick Spirit; being A Satyr in Prose Upon the Manners and Luxury of the Times* (1711; 6d†). Dennis argues for “the immediate Suppression of bare-fac’d Luxury, the spreading Contagion of which is the greatest Corrupter of the Publick Manners, and the greatest Extinguisher of Publick Spirit” (v-vi). This plan can be realized by instituting taxes on luxury, and he encourages such a policy in this high-toned essay.
deliberately chosen and each is condemned with conviction. In The South Sea Scheme (1721), William Hogarth satirizes a topical event as a symptom of broader social malady. From a distinctly moral viewpoint, Hogarth illustrates “Monys magick power” to blight a society (as he writes in the verse that appears on the print).\footnote{News from Hell: or, A Match for the Directors; A Satire (1721; 1s) is both a generalized plaint on acquisitiveness and an angry attack on a very specific manifestation of widespread avarice: “How goes the Stock, becomes the gen’ral Cry,” encouraged by the “Villain Crew” of directors, and England is “Bought and Sold, / By the damn’d thirst of curst delusive Gold” (6, 7, 8).} News from Hell: or, A Match for the Directors; A Satire (1721; 1s) is both a generalized plaint on acquisitiveness and an angry attack on a very specific manifestation of widespread avarice: “How goes the Stock, becomes the gen’ral Cry,” encouraged by the “Villain Crew” of directors, and England is “Bought and Sold, / By the damn’d thirst of curst delusive Gold” (6, 7, 8).\footnote{Particularized social satires vary in intensity of moral judgment, tone, and ferocity, but together they represent an increasingly common type of satiric enterprise.}

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**Argument and inquiry: Mandeville and Prior**

Social and moral satire in the early eighteenth century can be all-inclusive or painfully individuated. Like religio-political satire in this period, it can also be more a matter of Defoe’s “Grand Inquiry” than simple denunciation. Mandeville and Prior both produce pieces of inquisitive, argumentative satire in this period, and though they are not the only practitioners of this type of satire, I will focus my discussion on them.\footnote{Mandeville’s The Fable of the Bees: or, Private Vices Publick Benefits (1714) comprises rigorous, if often playful, social commentary. The Fable includes an earlier version of the satire (The Grumbling Hive: or, Knaves Turn’d Honest [1705; 6d†]), twenty prose “Remarks” on that work, and “An Enquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue.” The satire was reprinted in 1723 (5s†) with expanded

68 The South Sea Company (and all it stands for) is also targeted in a pair of satiric dramatic skits by William Chetwood, The Stock-Jobbers (1720) and South-Sea; or, the Biters Bit (1720).\footnote{The author of Three Satires . . . to that Little Gentleman, of Great Vanity, who has just published, A Fourth Volume of Homer (1719), also combines pointed attack with more general complaint. He maligns Pope and comments more broadly on perceived cultural collapse: “This age of nonsense rivals all the past” (11).} The author of Three Satires . . . to that Little Gentleman, of Great Vanity, who has just published, A Fourth Volume of Homer (1719), also combines pointed attack with more general complaint. He maligns Pope and comments more broadly on perceived cultural collapse: “This age of nonsense rivals all the past” (11).

69 See also The Stage-Beaux toss’d in a Blanket: or, Hypocrisie Alamode (1704; 1s 6d†), a quasi-dramatic piece whose author (perhaps Charles Gildon?) indicts Jeremy Collier as (says the title page) “A Pretending Scourge to the English Stage.” The ridicule of Collier and his followers is stinging and wonderfully funny—but this is not simply meanly rebuking them. The characters rehearse (at length) various arguments for and against the stage, and—despite the incisive caricatures and mocking tone—the satire reads more like a point-by-point animadversion than a lampoon.}
“Remarks” and two new essays—“A Search into the Nature of Society” and the especially controversial “An Essay on Charity and Charity-Schools,” in which Mandeville contends that charity schools are detrimental to a flourishing society. Such institutions inculcate their pupils with a sense of drive, rendering them unfit for the dog’s work that is theirs to do in a hierarchical society. “In Mandeville’s argument,” says Richard I. Cook, “pure economic expediency . . . justifies keeping the lower orders in a perpetual state of poverty and ignorance.” In the other 1723 addition, “A Search into the Nature of Society,” he sharply opposes the Third Earl of Shaftesbury, who

Fancies, that as Man is made for Society, so he ought to be born with a kind Affection to the whole, of which he is a part, and a Propensity to seek the Welfare of it. In pursuance of this Supposition, he calls every Action perform’d with Regard to the Publick Good, Virtuous; and all Selfishness, wholly excluding such a Regard, Vice. In respect to our Species he looks upon Virtue and Vice as permanent Realities that must ever be the same in all Countries and all Ages, and imagines that a Man of sound Understanding . . . may not only find out that Pulchrum & Honestum both in Morality and the Works of Art and Nature, but likewise govern himself by his Reason with as much Ease and Readiness as a good Rider manages a well taught Horse by the Bridle. (372)

The argument is obviously part and parcel with Mandeville’s overriding concerns in the Fable, but my point is that, as witheringly personal as passages of the “Enquiry” are, the satirical thrust of the essay is not mere derogation of Shaftesbury. Mandeville is exploring, arguing, scrutinizing. Like the rest of the Fable, this represents, in Phillip Harth’s phrase, a kind of “intellectual satire.”

Harth is right to warn against reading the various pieces of the Fable, composed in bits over twenty years, “as a coherent philosophical argument” (325), but Mandeville’s satire is ultimately an investigation and a revelation of paradoxes as well as a negative critique. The subtitle constitutes the famous central paradox: “Private Vices Publick Benefits.” Individual vices like greed and vanity are necessary to a prosperous society. In a world in which “reformation of manners” movements have succeeded, the standard of living would become unrecognizably and intolerably bad. Mandeville

73 In The Modern Prophets (1709), Durfey blasts the moralists of the first decade of the eighteenth century, though not on the grounds Mandeville’s mocks them. Durfey’s prologue makes very clear that he is targeting sham
ridicules Christian moralists and others who claim “virtue” for themselves, observing that they live happily in a society whose affluence requires the very vice they deprecate. The virtuous are hypocrites, he argues, and their duplicity “is encouraged by a Christian morality which,” Harth explains, he “regards as unrealistic, and therefore incapable of being practiced by those who subscribe to it” (334). This is the system against which Mandeville writes in the *Fable*. His satire is not simply moralistic tub-thumping meant to expose and/or shame the counterfeiters into less objectionable behavior; the argument is much more complex than that. Society can have *either* morality *or* prosperity. Without simply denouncing one choice and advocating the other, Mandeville insists that “having decided in favor of one alternative, they ought not to lament the absence of the other.”

The tone of the piece is less harshly condemnatory than coolly logical; the *Fable* is unnervingly short on savage indignation. This is the work of a realistic social philosopher, not a lampoonist, a malcontent, or a misanthrope. It is also a universe apart from the satires on hypocrisy or greed penned by the poets of the 1690s.

Another mocking piece of satiric inquiry is Matthew Prior’s *Alma: or, The Progress of the Mind*. *In Three Cantos* (1718), a burlesque poem with a weighty philosophical point. Prior’s subject, Monroe K. Spears observes, “is the problem of the mind’s relation to, and situation within, the body—a problem given a new urgency by the dualism implied by scientific method and formulated . . . by Descartes.” Spears concludes that the “system” of *Alma* is an illustration, against Cartesian dualism, “of the intimate union between mind and body.” Prior also rejects the Aristotelian argument that the mind or soul is everywhere in the body, a position he ridicules in the poem’s opening.

ALMA in Verse; in Prose, the MIND,
By ARISTOTLE’s Pen defin’d,

moralizers, though as John McVeagh points out, the motives are political as well as religious/social. “The prophets include sympathizers of the Stuart pretender, and Durfey has fun at the expense of these still real threats to the Protestant succession” (*Thomas Durfey and Restoration Drama*, 141).


Cook says, “Mandeville’s insistence on the symbiotic relationship between vice and national greatness would have shocked fewer readers had he coupled it . . . with a more convincing display of disapprobation” (*Bernard Mandeville*, 117).

Throughout the Body squat or tall,
Is, bonâ fide, All in All.
And yet, slap dash, is All again
In every Sinew, Nerve, and Vein. (ll. 14-19)\(^77\)

This is the stuff of philosophy—but its tone is that of a hudibrastic romp, and neither the denseness of the argument nor the liveliness of the satire should be neglected. As a compromise between Aristotelian and Cartesian notions, Prior sarcastically advocates “a system in which the mind progresses from the feet to the head as the man ages.”\(^78\) *Alma* is at once ponderous and playful, an overtly mocking piece of philosophical argumentation.\(^79\)

Early eighteenth-century social and moral satirists are not as experimental as their religio-political counterparts.\(^80\) Much of the social commentary in this quarter century takes a form recognizable from the preceding years, including some of the more generalized satire and also didactic dramatic satire, which did not flourish in the late seventeenth century but got written (especially by Shadwell). In social as in political satire, the presence of topical reference and individuated attack is noticeably greater than it was in the 1690s. The playful entertainment pieces (e.g., *An Act at Oxford*) make a striking contrast, in general social satire, with sober condemnation (e.g., *The Merchants Advocate*). The “Reformation of Manners” movement unsurprisingly registers in satire: some works mock the enterprise (e.g., *The Fable of the Bees*), some participate with preachy gusto (e.g., *Belsize-House*), some critique the “Reformation” societies but support their mission (e.g., *Reformation of Manners*). A considerable amount of social satire

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\(^79\) Prior’s *Solomon on the Vanity of the World* (1708) is a non-satirical ethical/metaphysical argument. “The chief point on which Prior vacillates,” Rippy concludes, “is whether, in a world of vanities in which reason is but an erring guide, it is wise for a man to take his fill of the pleasures, however vain and transitory, that he can find at hand.” Many of Prior’s poems “suggest that man should take his pleasures where he can find them, thus making life at least temporarily richer and fuller,” but “Solomon warns that such pleasures are deceptive, dangerous, and ultimately unsatisfying” (*Matthew Prior*, 89).
\(^80\) Much of the satire on the stage in this period is social and moral, and Richard W. Bevis points out that, “The few notable comedies between Farquhar’s death and *The Beggar’s Opera* were mostly deft applications of proven formulas; significant innovations were rare. It was a trying time for the theatre: the government viewed drama sternly, and occasionally intervened, but not firmly or consistently; audiences wanted decorous entertainment, not quality, satire, or experimentation” (*English Drama*, 162).
in this period is serious, either heavy-handedly moral and unleavened by humor or witty and energetic but philosophically profound.

The religio-political, social, and moral satires surveyed in sections II and III have received scant critical attention: they are mostly non-literary in subject and conspicuously short on artistic trappings. An informed reader in the 1710s and early 1720s, however, would almost certainly have pointed to these pieces to illustrate contemporary English satiric practice; these works are what early eighteenth-century satire looked like. That they do not figure in our histories of eighteenth-century satire suggests a problem in characterization. What modern scholars do discuss from these years is the practice of the so-called “Scriblerians”—and we need at this point to consider where those satirists fit in the world I have been surveying.

IV. The alleged “Scriblerians”

Scholars rarely discuss eighteenth-century satire without invoking the Scriblerians.81 Because the “Club” met in this period (the known gatherings occurred in 1714), and because Pope, Swift, and Gay loom so large in the later 1720s, critics have tended to see the early eighteenth century as dominated by our “Scriblerians.” Implicitly or explicitly, the works of Pope, Swift, Gay, and Arbuthnot are understood to constitute a mode of satire—variously practiced by each of them throughout his career and widely influential among their contemporaries. “Scriblerian” satire is assumed to characterize, control, and

81 I have discussed the “Scriblerus Club” and its influence at length in “The Myth of Scriblerus,” Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies 31 (2008): 77-99. The correspondence of Pope, Swift, Gay, Arbuthnot, and Parnell gives us very little grounds for assuming that the Club’s aims figured very centrally in their lives. If any of our “Scriblerians” understood the meetings of 1714 as life-changing, or as the inspiration for later successes, we have no evidence of those sentiments. And, while some of their contemporaries certainly recognized the group members as personal friends and political allies, I have found nothing to suggest that the men were seen as a “Scriblerian” cohort at any time during the eighteenth century. (What spotty accounts we have of the “Club” meetings also suggest the possibility that Addison and Congreve were among the participants—two figures whom literary critics are none too eager to include among the “Scriblerian” ranks.) Satires signed by “Scriblerus” in the eighteenth century differ radically from one another: some attack pedantry, some attack Pope, and some attack harsh satires on bad writers; some are gloomy and pessimistic, some are playful, and some are somewhere in between. Some writers connected Scriblerus to Pope and company, but that association was by no means invariable. “Scriblerian” satire would not have meant to contemporaries what it means to us. Equally important is the fact that, however much help they gave each other, our “Scriblerians” produce very different kinds of work, as I hope will be evident in my discussion of them in this chapter and the next.
somehow exemplify the practice of the first half of the eighteenth century (from *A Tale of a Tub* to the 1743 *Dunciad* and beyond). Two basic but vital questions need to be considered. How similar are the works of the men we call the Scriblerians, and how predominant is what they do in the satiric culture of the early eighteenth century?

I will begin with Pope, not because he is the star satirist in the quarter century before *The Dunciad*—but because, unlike the others, he is barely a satirist at all. “Although Swift was a lifelong satirist,” Leopold Damrosch rightly observes, “Pope was not. Of the three great poems of his twenties—*An Essay on Criticism*, *Windsor-Forest*, and *The Rape of the Lock*—only the last is satiric, and it is as much a comedy as a satire.” Griffin and others have regarded *An Essay on Criticism* (1711; 1s†) as at least quasi-satirical, and Weinbrot has recently defined the work as a “Menippean satire” of sorts, but the swipes at literary, critical and social failings hardly dominate the poem. Pope’s program for moral criticism no doubt contains satirical jibes. That contemporaries would have recognized it as a satire, however, or that Pope imagined himself as a satirist in writing it, seems unlikely.

*The Rape of the Lock* (1714 edition, 1s†) is universally included in the canon of eighteenth-century satiric masterpieces and hailed as the culmination of the mock-epic in English satire. But, as George Sherburn accurately remarked in 1934, “The *Rape of the Lock* one almost forgets to call satire.” What is the poem a satire on? The social squabble behind it is well-known. Pope claimed to intend no offense to anyone; he wanted simply to effect conciliation between quarreling families by way of a pleasantly comic depiction of the cutting of the lock. Again and again critics call attention to the “delicacy” of his touch. Raman Selden highlights his “subtle raillery,” his “pleasingly softened”

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descriptions, his “playful tone.” That Pope is mocking the vanities and pretensions of the beau monde is clear, but his criticism is gentle and sympathetic, attentive to the triviality and the beauty of the world he describes. Ian Jack emphatically and usefully distinguishes the Rape from Dryden’s more abrasive and judgmental lampoon against Shadwell. He argues that Pope’s poem is not written “against anyone. In so far as it is a satire, it opposes not a person but a moral fault: immoderate female pride.” Whereas Mac Flecknoe is a thoroughgoing “annihilation” of Dryden’s literary foe, Pope’s agenda is not defamation but potentially productive amusement. To explain the satire as Pope’s exposure of “moral ugliness and corruption” is to make heavy weather of a genial, affectionately teasing poem. The Dunciad is the work of a self-appointed cultural custodian, and the Epistles the compositions of a high-minded moral guardian. The Rape of the Lock is a brilliantly crafted diversion, the effort of an artist rather than a social reformer.

What Pope writes by way of negative satire in his early career is small-scale and mostly unpleasant. A version of his memorable portrait of Addison (“Atticus” in the Epistle to Arbuthnot) was evidently drafted in 1715; published in 1722, possibly without Pope’s consent; and expanded in Fragment of a Satire for the 1727 Works. In 1716, he attacked Edmund Curll in A Full and True Account of a Horrid and Barbarous Revenge by Poison, On the Body of Mr. Edmund Curll, Bookseller (3d†)—the publication of which was “stupid,” says Maynard Mack, because Curll was sure to retaliate. He promptly got his hands on a jeu d’esprit in which Pope ironically praises a quack physician; he printed it in 1716 under the title “Worms,” clearly attributed to Pope. This little pasquil, Mack argues, “was to haunt Pope for life” as an example of his spitefulness and misanthropy. Curll also published another of Pope’s poems that year, this one a burlesque of the sixteenth-century version of the first psalm done by Thomas Sternhold in particular. Mack contends that Pope primarily meant to ridicule “the sixth-grade singsong of Sternhold,” but that Curll and other enemies used the satire to underscore Pope’s Catholicism—that is, his

85 Selden, English Verse Satire, 133.
86 Jack, Augustan Satire, 93.
88 Damrosch, The Imaginative World of Alexander Pope, 111.
89 Mack, Alexander Pope: A Life (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 296, 297. The full title of the poem is To Mr. John Moore, Author of the Celebrated Worm-Powder.
irreligion. The lines against Addison are retaliatory, unkind, and personal; the “Worms” is mean-spirited but essentially frivolous; the burlesque of the psalm is playfully derisive. Sherburn is correct to describe these works as “firecracker squibs such as a clever schoolboy might produce.” Pope’s early satire has nothing to do with our image of him as a high-toned moralizer and a fiercely denunciatory cultural warrior.

Gay is definitely writing satire in the early eighteenth century, though his satiric efforts are rarely at all straightforward. His targets are sometimes clear enough. He is a master of satiric burlesque: he travesties epic in The Fan (1713), tragedy and comedy and pastoral in The What d’ye Call It (1715), classical epics and georgics in Trivia (1716), and intrigue comedy in Three Hours after Marriage, written in collaboration with Pope and Arbuthnot in 1717. In Wine (1708) and The Shepherd’s Week (1714) he parodies the prurience of John Philips. He makes a hobby out of lampooning John Dennis, whose Appius and Virginia he burlesques in The Mohocks (1712); the preface to The What d’ye Call It parodies the critic’s ponderous style; the caricature in Three Hours after Marriage of Dennis as Sir Tremendous Longinus is brilliantly funny, as is the representation of John Woodward as Dr. Fossile. Gay mocks people and ideas and genres to wonderful effect, but the satiric thrust of his early pieces is by no means always obvious.

Most of Gay’s satires are notoriously indefinable. Some of the targets are easily identifiable—though not all of them and not all the time, and even where the objects of ridicule are discernible the satirist’s position is not necessarily evident. Wine is Gay’s earliest satiric piece, a parody of Philips’s Cyder (1708) and a burlesque drinking georgic that ends with a series of encomiums to the Queen and four politicians. David Nokes discusses Gay’s “virtuoso performance” at length, but concludes that “Wine is a youthful exercise, ostentatious and sometimes uncertain in its parodic effects, and ambiguous

90 Mack, Alexander Pope, 298. “All that spring—a season when religious and political passions were fierce owing to the current trials, sentencings, and executions of Jacobite rebels—[Curll] kept up a running attack in the newspapers, insinuating that Pope was a Stuart sympathizer, and his Homer . . . a piece of Roman Catholic propaganda. The intention was obviously to annoy Pope, but more particularly to frighten his subscribers into withdrawing their support” (299). The full title is A Roman Catholic Version of the First Psalm.
91 Sherburn, The Early Career of Alexander Pope, 305.
in both its literary and political affiliations.” Nokes says the “political significance . . . is far from clear”; Downie asks if Gay “is applying his encomiums ‘directly wrong’”; Juan Christian Pellicer argues that these lines “are neither ambiguous nor subverted by the ironies of parody, and since they represent a shrewd and timely bid for [Whig] patronage they need not seem confusing.” What Gay thinks he is doing in these verses is probably unknowable now, but the crux is their essential ambiguity. Whether the satiric object of *Wine* is more than a teasing burlesque of Philips is hard to guess. What of Gay’s next satire, *The Mohocks*, a highly topical piece that was never acted? The satirical representation of the gang of London rakehells has been understood in very sober terms. Peter Lewis points out that “Gay has some fun at the expense of the tragic pretensions and grandiloquent verbiage of his contemporaries,” but that, “The hooligans paradoxically acquire some of the dignity of the heroic world, and the result is a disquieting indeterminacy. If hooligans can sound like heroes, might it not be the case that heroes actually behave like hooligans?” I grant the implication, but I have a hard time imagining this piece as anything but a cream puff.

The more problematic satires are those in which Gay’s sunny buoyancy is discordant with the darker ramifications of what he describes. The alarming disparity between despairing conclusion and bouncy delivery is not unique to *The Beggar’s Opera* (discussed in the next chapter). In *The Fan*, Gay describes the titular high-society accessory in the elevated style of the mock-heroic: “I sing that graceful Toy,” the poem opens, “whose waving Play / With gentle Gales relieves the sultry Day.”

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probably right to suggest that Gay is exposing unpleasant social realities. If that is the case, what are we to make of the comic frivolity of the poem? The same lack of correspondence between tone and subject is found in *Trivia: Or, The Art of Walking the Streets of London*, which has been read as everything from a celebratory topographical poem to a profound social/moral satire. The Walker describes the sights and sounds, the perks and dangers, of strolling the city; much of what goes on is grubby, dirty, sordid, but the Walker’s report is cool and unperturbed. Stephen Copley and Ian Haywood are correct in insisting that the poem’s “reports of waste . . . do not produce the effect we might expect”—that is, disgusted judgment of the society responsible for the waste. They highlight Gay’s “ironic circumlocutions and qualifications,” as well as his “evasions of the implications of the subject-matter.” The interpretive difficulties arise from the fundamental ambiguities of the Walker himself: what is his status, vis-à-vis the world in which he traffics, and what exactly is his perspective on what he describes? The elusive ironies of this poem have yielded no consensus. *The Fan* and *Trivia* are both social satires that reflect Gay’s discontentment with existing social structures—but they are also jolly and self-consciously trifling works. *The What d’ye Call It* is similarly unsettling, its potentially trenchant social satire diffused by its appearance in a decidedly nonsensical plot.

What are we to make of such works? Gay has a disconcerting tendency to present unhappy social truths with merry exuberance: “The complaint is serious,” says Hume, “but the presentation is not.” Gay is undoubtedly conscious of the social issues he raises in his early satires, and we cannot realistically deny their presence. But the literary contexts in which he presents them are such, generically or tonally,

96 Nokes describes the social argument of *The Fan* thusly: “The poem traces the social and verbal chiasmus between one person’s toy and another’s toil; between a fine lady’s fashionable toilette and the toilsome labors of her servants. The grotto of Venus where ‘busy Cupids’ labor to produce ‘each trinket that adorns the modern dame,’ is presented as a proletarian underworld of ceaseless toil.” He concludes of lines 111-14 and 131-34, “While there is a good deal of comic charm in this troglodyte vision of industrial labor, the social message is clear” (*John Gay*, 132).


as significantly to undercut them. The critique, in *Trivia* and elsewhere, is abated. The inconsequentiality of the settings suggests that these are not attempts to have a real effect on the world and the issues raised. One interpretation is that Gay is genuinely concerned but has no conviction that positive change can occur, and so makes his social points as throwaways. Another possibility is that he raises these issues in some seriousness but leaves their interpretation strictly up to the reader/viewer, who can admit and worry about the social commentary if so inclined, or ignore the criticisms and let the tone rule. Other plausible explanations no doubt exist—but Gay is *not* making a systematic, strenuous effort to communicate a hard-core socio-political satiric point.

Arbuthnot’s reputation as a satirist depends largely on *The History of John Bull*, published under that title in 1727 but comprising four parts which appeared in 1712.\(^{100}\) The John Bull pamphlets are straightforward political allegory concerned with foreign and domestic affairs in the first dozen years of the eighteenth century—the War of Spanish Succession, Sacheverell’s trial, debates about Occasional Conformity, arguments for war or peace, the personalities of the major political players of the day. The basic plot outline goes something like this. John Bull (England) and Nicholas Frog (the Dutch) are engaged in a lawsuit (the War of Spanish Succession) against Philip Baboon (the Duke of Anjou) who has acceded to the estate of Lord Strutt (Philip V, King of Spain), courtesy of Lewis Baboon (Louis XIV). Bull and Frog inform Lord Strutt that they have exclusive contract as drapers to all the Lord Strutts: he must promise that he and his heirs will use their services instead of Lewis’s, or they will bring legal action against him. He obtains his livery from Lewis, inciting an interminable legal wrangle. In chapter V of *Law is a Bottomless-Pit*, Arbuthnot provides short sketches of Bull, Frog, and Humphrey Hocus, their chief attorney (a caricature of the Duke of Marlborough). Bull is “an honest plain-dealing Fellow, Cholerick, Bold, and of a very unconstant Temper” who “dreaded not Old Lewis” in game or battle, “but then he was very apt to quarrel with his best Friends, especially if they pretended to govern him: If you

\(^{100}\) The parts are *Law is a Bottomless-Pit* (published 6 March 1712; 3d), *John Bull In His Senses* (18 March; 2d), *John Bull Still In His Senses* (17 April; 4d), and *Lewis Baboon Turned Honest and John Bull Politician* (31 July; 6d).
flatter’d him, you might lead him like a Child.” And so on, forming the now-famous composite of British characteristics that Bull has been taken to represent. Frog is described as “a cunning fly Whoreson” willing to “pine his Belly to save his Pocket”—a clearly depreciatory caricature of the much-reviled Dutch (10). The attorney, Hocus, “lov’d Money, was smooth-tongu’d, gave good Words, and seldom lost his Temper”; he “lov’d himself better than” his family, and “was plauy Hen-peck’d” (by the Duchess of Marlborough; p. 11). Led by the self-seeking Hocus, a fleet of lawyers convince Bull and Frog that the suit can be settled quickly—but of course the affair drags on and on, draining their resources and accomplishing nothing.

Bull soon discovers that Hocus has had an intrigue with Bull’s wife (the Whig ministry). He has a row with her, after which she dies, leaving a written curse that his lawsuit will never be ended. He is left with three daughters, Polemia, Discordia, and Usuria (war, faction, and penury). He takes a second wife (the Tory ministry of Oxford and Bolingbroke), who advises him to abandon his legal pursuit and get back to his own work. She also warns him that his attorneys’ cajolery is merely an attempt to swindle him. Bull is outraged, but when he scrutinizes the financial records he discovers the truth of her admonition. He calls upon Sir Roger Bold (Harley) for aid in escaping the lawsuit, but others—including Hocus (now the guardian of Polemia, or war) and Esquire South (Austria)—scheme and labor to prevent peace at all costs. Meanwhile, Bull’s mother, the Church of England, struggles with her daughter (Scotland) and the daughter’s Calvinist lover, with Low-Church Anglicanism, and with the Pope. At the end of *John Bull Still In his Senses*, Bull, Frog, and Lewis meet to resolve their differences at a conference at Salutation Tavern (Utrecht). After much difficulty, they decide upon an acceptable treaty, and the fourth and fifth pamphlets describes the financial settlement between Bull and Frog, the uproar in Bull’s family upon his return from Salutation Tavern, a visit from Baboon, and other aftermaths of the peace agreement.

What did Arbuthnot think he was doing in these pamphlets? He satirizes individuals, political factions, religious sects, and institutions in ways that would have been clear to his readers, but he does so without much animus. The allegory is high-spirited, written by a politically-minded humorist who was
obviously enjoying himself. Had Arbuthnot foreseen the fall of the Tory ministry two years later, Robert C. Steensma points out, the satire would certainly have been noticeably sour and gloomy.\footnote{Steensma, Dr. John Arbuthnot (Boston: Twayne, 1979), 54.} Written during a period of Tory dominance, however, these pamphlets are much more the stuff of amused delight than propaganda, evidently not meant to influence the course of current events (e.g., war and peace) but to show up the Whigs and to gratify the Tories.

*The Art of Political Lying* (1712; 3d?) is a much different—and considerably more difficult—satire. The provided definition of the “art of political lying” is, like the piece as a whole, ponderous:

*The Art of convincing the People of Salutary Falshoods, for some good End.* [The author] calls it an *Art* to distinguish it from that of telling *Truth*, which does not seem to want *Art*; but then he would have this understood only as to the *Invention*, because there is indeed more Art necessary to convince the People of a *Salutary* *Truth*, than a *Salutary* *Falshood*. (8)

He proceeds to provide not a theory of this art but a proposal for a theoretical examination of it.\footnote{The full title of the piece is *Proposals For Printing A very Curious Discourse, in Two Volumes in Quarto, Intitled, Pseudologia politice; or, a Treatise of the Art of Political Lying, with An Abstract of the First Volume of the said Treatise.*} The Proposer projects chapters that will cover a variety of subjects dealing with the nature of political lying and lies, the lawfulness of the practice, the characteristics of the lies and liars, the question of which party is most skilled at the art, “the Celerity and Duration of Lyes” (20), and so on. In the first chapter, for example, he claims to reason “Philosophically concerning the Nature of the Soul of Man, and those Qualities which render it susceptible of Lyes” (7). A later chapter purports to classify the various species of political lies: (1) the detractory, including simple libel and gossip; (2) the additory, which “gives to a Great Man a greater share of Reputation than belongs to him”; and, (3) the translatory, “a Lye that transfers the Merit of a Man’s good Action to another who is in himself more deserving; or transfers the Demerit of a bad Action from the true Author, to a Person who is in himself less deserving” (11).

*The Art of Political Lying* is oblique, ironic, and dense, a piece of at least implicitly judgmental probing, not invective or comic ridicule. It belongs to the world I described in section II much more than
do any of Pope’s or Gay’s satiric writings. In Conal Condren’s illuminating study of this satire, he describes it as “a somewhat disingenuous commentary on contemporary and party generated accusations of dishonesty,” as a “parody of views of theoretical knowledge,” as “a satire of Machiavellian and post-Machiavellian political theories,” and as “a comment on contemporary changes in the lexicon of English political values, on the fraught and refracted relationships between the terms of public virtue and private worth” (8-9). The piece is full of mocking ironies. Condren underscores Arbuthnot’s two different uses of indirection: the author distances himself from the satiric persona, and “the force of the satire itself is indirect or ambivalently focused” (29). On the apparent satiric object of *The Art of Political Lying* I again quote Condren.

Through a non-confrontational approach and encoded invitations to skepticism, Arbuthnot can appeal across Swift’s friar-like affiliations and inveigle the reader into a tacit and critical participation as the account unfolds. If perchance the fiction is swallowed, the presupposition that politics is a fundamentally dishonest business is taken down as well. If we merely appreciate the joke, say as Tory sympathizers, we are nevertheless nudged toward a critical perspective on the political world of which we are a part. (31)

A large part of the satire’s effect depends upon the reader’s disposition and political sensibilities. Arbuthnot’s motives are hard to discern. At a guess, he is insinuating treachery in contemporary English politics and (inconsistently) ridiculing the speaker, the author of the phantom proposals. *The Art of Political Lying* is a product of the decade and a half of cautionary irony and dissimulation I discussed above. Arbuthnot seems to be raising questions about the language of politics, and its potential for deception, in a frustratingly indirect satire.

Clichés about the “Scriblerians” and longstanding assumptions about their interconnections have made scholars assume more commonality than actually exists. Pope, Gay, and Arbuthnot (with Swift) spent some time together in 1714; they were friends and even political allies; at different times and to

103 Conal Condren says of *The Art of Political Lying*, “There is in it nothing of the bracing slippage between satire and diatribe and insinuated slander, no anger, no defamation or derision, no bald insult; the moral edge always maintained by the satiric persona seems dulled or only intermittently visible. The whole of the little work is cool, indirect, ironic and elegant.” See *Satire, Lies and Politics: The Case of Dr Arbuthnot* (London: Macmillan, 1997), 6.
varying degrees, they were in touch with each other and occasionally made suggestions about each other’s work. In the advertisement to *Three Hours after Marriage*, Gay acknowledges having received help “from two of my Friends” (unnamed, but almost certainly Pope and Arbuthnot). Pope and Gay both have some fun at Dennis’s expense; Arbuthnot and Gay employ irony, though not in the same way. If we look for incongruities as well as correspondences, without trying to make these men into a “Scriblerian” cohort, what do we find?

Pope is a master technician who produces very little satire in these years. What satire he does write is either pure fluff or personal lampoon. Not much is at stake for him in *The Rape of the Lock*; he implicitly exposes the vacuity and triviality of the *beau monde*, but the degree to which he objects to what he describes is limited. Gay also uses mock-epic in *The Fan*, though his sympathy with and affection for high society is virtually nil. His is a much chillier poem than Pope’s, and his attitude much less determinate. Neither Pope nor Gay does straightforward allegory of the sort Arbuthnot practices in his comic *John Bull*. Insofar as Pope has deeply-felt satiric concerns in this quarter century, they are predominantly cultural. Gay has a great deal of fun travestying literary forms, and most of his early pieces include complaint about social structures, though the complaint is usually obscured or neutralized by tone and contexts. Gay definitely does not force-feed negativity to his audience, but unlike Pope he seems bothered by the unhappy realities he perceives. Arbuthnot’s preoccupations are largely political, involving either particular personalities and factions or broader political philosophy. The conflict between the sobriety of Gay’s allegations and the joviality with which they are presented is jarring, but the effect is not at all like the difficulty posed by Arbuthnot’s ironies in *The Art of Political Lying*. Neither is it like Swift’s vexing irony. Gay can come across as flippant and hands-off; Swift’s satire cannot really be read that way. Arbuthnot and Gay are on about different subjects, and their methods and satiric styles have nothing in common. And, as Condren points out, the doctor’s satire is radically
dissimilar from Pope’s and Swift’s, whose “aggressive and socially driven satiric impulse” he does not exhibit.\footnote{Condren, \textit{Satire, Lies and Politics}, 36.}

The notion that Pope, Arbuthnot, and Gay are three of the four chief practitioners of a “Scriblerian mode” of satire is a critical delusion. Another much-cherished fancy is that this “mode” is somehow central to and illustrative of the world of early eighteenth-century satire. Except in very loose terms, the satires of these writers do not really “belong” to the categories discussed in sections II and III—attack, defense, warning, ideological argumentation, and didacticism are not what we find in Pope and Gay. Gay’s \textit{The Fan} and \textit{Trivia} include what could be trenchant social satire—but the lightness and brightness of their tone make them very different from frivolous generalized satire (e.g., \textit{The London Terrae-filius}), heavy-handed social preachment (e.g., \textit{The Merchants Advocate}), and more pointedly topical satires (e.g., \textit{The Dissenting Hypocrite}). Arbuthnot comes closer to his contemporaries: the \textit{John Bull} pamphlets cheerfully mock recognizable political figures, and \textit{The Art of Political Lying} is dense and disconcerting, very much a part of the decade and a half of ironic satire described in section II. Pope is particularly out of line with what is going on around him. His squibs are antagonistic, but his better known works are remote in kind from the satire of his contemporaries. That \textit{The Rape of the Lock} typifies satiric practice in this quarter century is a conclusion that can be drawn only if one ignores the vast majority of the satires produced and circulating in this period. The idea of a single mode practiced by the “Club” members is equally difficult to credit. For all their personal interaction, Pope, Gay, and Arbuthnot produce astoundingly different types of satire—and Swift is another beast altogether.

\section*{V. Swift before \textit{Gulliver}}

Swift writes a lot of satire in this quarter century, and his practice is far from uniform. From this period, only \textit{A Tale of a Tub} (with \textit{The Battle of the Books} and \textit{The Mechanical Operation of the Spirit}) has received much attention from satire scholars. Critics sometimes mention the Bickerstaff hoax, \textit{An
Argument against Abolishing Christianity, the Drapier’s Letters, and a few of the poems, but our sense of Swift’s early satiric practice derives largely from the Tale and from its author’s (later) association with the so-called “Scriblerians.” In this section I want to answer a simple question: what does early “Swiftian satire” comprise? I will say flatly at the outset that Swift as early eighteenth-century satirist belongs not to the world of the “Scriblerians,” but to that of Defoe, Tutchin, Maynwaring, and the other religio-political satirists discussed in section II. From the modern vantage point, Swift is the major practicing satirist of the early eighteenth century, but most impressions of him in that capacity privilege two strikingly atypical works separated by more than two decades. If we look beyond the Tale, reading not for evidence of latent Scriblerianism, what sort of satirist do we find Swift to be?

Jokiness and play

The playfulness of Swift’s satire has been much studied, especially in discussions of Gulliver’s Travels. He doubtless had fun savaging some of his foes, though the tonal difficulties posed by some of his satires make determining his mood difficult. A rollicking delivery does not always signal frivolity, and, as Claude Rawson points out, Swift tended to use light verse as a “vehicle of serious commentary.” How many of his early satires are simply amusements? I consider Mrs. Harris’s Petition (1701) and Mary the Cook-Maid’s Letter to Dr. Sheridan (1718) primarily entertaining pieces, both mimicking servant-speak. Swift wrote the first while staying at Berkeley Castle; the speaker is the chattering waiting-maid of the Countess. His one-page A Meditation upon a Broom-stick (1710; 2d) was evidently also conceived as a family joke. The Countess devotedly read Boyle’s Meditations, of which Swift’s poem is a jauntily

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105 Andrew Carpenter has argued convincingly for the influence of late seventeenth-century Dublin paper wars on Swift’s concept of satire. These performances, he says, were often parodic, as well as “brash, vulgar, confident, energetic, topsy-turvy, recognizing no bounds.” From my point of view, Carpenter’s demonstration offers a salutary reminder of Swift’s seventeenth-century contexts, as well as another reason not simply to pigeonhole him as a “Scriblerian” writer. See “A School for a Satirist: Swift’s Exposure to the Wars of Words in Dublin in the 1680s,” in Reading Swift: Papers from The Fourth Münster Symposium on Jonathan Swift, ed. Hermann J. Real and Helgard Stöver-Leidig (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2003), 161-75; quotation at p. 169.

106 Rawson, Order from Confusion Sprung, 158.

107 The full title of Mrs. Harris’s Petition is To Their Excellencies the Lord Justices of Ireland. The Humble Petition of Frances Harris, Who must Starve, and Die a Maid if it miscarries.
irreverent parody. “According to legend,” Nokes explains, “Swift slipped his own *Meditation* into the volume” when he was asked to read Boyle aloud to the Countess. His delivery was sober, and the lady did not realize that she was getting a burlesque rather than a *bona fide* piece of moralizing—she guilelessly commended Boyle for his ability to offer edifying lessons from even very trivial subjects.\(^{108}\) The satire is little more than a practical joke.

_Destruction and negativity_

Swift’s indignation is notoriously savage. Unsurprisingly, the devaluative impulse features much more prominently in his early satires than does the playful. I consider centrally negative those satires in which he is destructive or plaintive for the sake of destruction or complaint, rather than those in which he defames individuals or groups with apparent practical purpose (e.g., his satiric responses to Steele).

Several of Swift’s early satires are essentially non-particularized negative commentary. They are sometimes melancholy, sometimes disgusted or angry, but largely purposeless—except insofar as they reveal to humankind the pathetic smallness of the race or the squalor of its surroundings. For *Baucis and Philemon* (1709), he borrows Ovid’s tale, in which Jupiter and Apollo (in Swift’s version, two unnamed saints) wander the earth to test the hospitality of its inhabitants. They are uniformly mistreated, except by the singularly poor Baucis and Philemon, who invite the saints inside and share their meager rations. Virtue gets its reward: the couple’s home is turned into a church, and at the end of their lives, they become immortal trees. Swift’s version, however, does not end with their transformation. Generations pass before—as we are told matter-of-factly—a parson cuts down Baucis for wood to repair his barn; a grief-stricken Philemon deteriorates and is “stub’d and burnt” by the next parson (l. 178).\(^{109}\) This conclusion obviously subverts Ovid’s image of natural prosperity and immortality. *Baucis and Philemon* is at once a statement of general pessimism and, more particularly, a comment on “the rotting Irish

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A Description of a City Shower (1710) is a humorous but hardly cheerful mock-georgic, surveying a scene of grubbiness and malodorous filth. The memorable last lines point up the soiled reality of the city:

Sweepings from Butchers Stalls, Dung, Guts, and Blood,
Drown’d Puppies, stinking Sprats, all drench’d in Mud,
Dead Cats and Turnip-Tops come tumbling down the Flood. (ll. 61-63)

In Phillis, Or, the Progress of Love and The Progress of Beauty (both 1719), Swift is once again offering negative description, this time rendering the full unpleasantness of human relationships and the human body. The Progress of Beauty, the first of the Strephon-Celia poems, describes Celia’s ghastly appearance (“Crackt Lips, foul Teeth, and gummy Eyes”) before she creates a softer façade by means of “Pencil, Paint, and Brush” (ll. 15, 46). Too close a view will reveal the characteristic ugliness of the body—a familiar point in Swift’s satire, and a thoroughly unhappy one.

In more particularized satires, Swift is less doleful than destructive, reveling in gratuitous vituperation. His vilification of individuals tends to have broad implications about society and humanity, making these works both personally nasty and more generally negative. His Description of a Salamander (wr. 1705; pub. 1711) “depicts Lord Cutts, appointed commander-in-chief in Ireland in 1705, as a repulsive lecher who has infected the country with venereal disease.”

The devaluation of the man is undeniable, and Swift also undercuts modern notions of heroism, as he does even more witheringly in A Satirical Elegy On the Death of a late Famous General (wr. 1722). That poem opens with (ironic) lamentation on the demise of Marlborough, who has expired in a totally unheroic way: “His Grace!

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111 The companion piece to this poem is A Description of the Morning (1709), a quietly humorous mock-description that exposes, argues J. A. Downie, “the full range of discrepancies between actual and ideal.” See Jonathan Swift: Political Writer (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 126. Both poems have a leveling effect.
112 Fabricant, Swift’s Landscape, 85.
113 What we are meant to understand about Description of a Salamander, Alan S. Fisher contends, “is a typical process which Cutts represents—the way in which it always happens, during wars, that ‘reptiles’ become the leaders of men.” See “Swift’s Verse Portraits: A Study of His Originality as an Augustan Satirist,” Studies in English Literature 14 (1974): 343-56, at 345. The elegy on Marlborough, unlike The Fable of Midas, is not a purposive satire. As Herbert Davis rightly points out, it was “too late to be of any use as political satire.” See Jonathan Swift: Essays on his Satire and Other Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 131.
impossible! what dead! / Of old age too, and in his bed!” ll.1-2). The man and his legacy are defiled: “He left behind so great a stink,” we are told, and heroism and heroes become “empty things” (ll.16, 25).

Swift tromps on the Duke’s grave with visceral pleasure, though his perception of the hollowness of human grandeur cannot have been a happy-making one. The same cynicism marks The Virtues of Sid Hamet the Magician’s Rod (1710), Swift’s “revenge” poem on Sidney Godolphin. Written upon Godolphin’s fall from power, the satire could have had no practical point: Swift is lampooning a political enemy as a dastardly louse who buys off potential opposition. A personalized complaint of another sort is Whitshed’s Motto On His Coach (1724), in which Swift blasts not a shady politician but a crooked judge. In the wake of the Wood’s half-pence controversy, William Whitshed had presided over trials in Dublin involving Swift’s printers, bullying jurors until they produced the desired verdict. Swift pulls no punches: “LIBERTAS & natale Solum; / Fine Words; I wonder where you stole ’um” (ll. 1-2). As Herbert Davis rightly concludes, “In Swift’s fiercest attacks there is no room left for any sense of play, for any of the tricks of the virtuoso—a fierce indignation burns within him, fed by his outraged sense of justice, his bitterness at the hollow mockery of so much human greatness.”

Purposive defamation and defense

The condemnations of Marlborough and Whitshed are acid, but some of Swift’s best deprecation is propagandistic and even defensive. Like a lot of political satirists, he uses personal attack as a form of pragmatic defamation of his enemies. An Excellent New Song, being the Intended Speech of a famous

114 Swift describes his poem a “lampoon,” printed “for revenge on a certain person.” See Journal to Stella, ed. Harold Williams, 2 vols. (1948; rpt. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 1:37. Swift mentions this lampoon frequently in the Journal, emphasizing his anonymity. In Letter VI, he says “My lampoon is cried up to the skies; but nobody suspects me for it” (59). In Letter VII, he urges silence: “Have you heard of the verses about the Rod of Sid Hamet? Say nothing of them for your life. Hardly any body suspects me for them, only they think no-body but Prior or I could write them” (65). In Letter XI, he says: “What you say of Sid Hamet is well enough; that an enemy should like it, and a friend not; and that telling the author would make both change their opinions” (127-28).

115 See also Swift’s Verses on the upright Judge, who condemned the Drapier’s Printer (1724), and his 1725 attacks on Wood, Wood, an Insect; On Wood the Iron-monger; and A Simile, on Our Want of Silver, and the only Way to remedy it.

Orator against Peace (1711) is a response to Nottingham’s defection to the Whigs, whom he joined in order “to bring down the ministry on the question of peace without Spain.” Swift reports in his Journal to Stella that Oxford “was hinting as if he wished a ballad was made” on Nottingham. The Excellent New Song ridicules the speechmaking of the turncoat (“Dismal”) and reveals his defection as the unscrupulous machination of an unscrupulous man. Using a technique current among his fellow political satirists, Swift lets his target expose himself; the text, as the title suggests, is Dismal’s “Intended Speech.”

But, some will cry, Turn-Coat, and rip up old Stories,
How I always pretended to be for the Tories:
I answer; the Tories were in my good Graces,
Till all my Relations were put into Places. (ll. 21-24)

Swift satirizes Nottingham again in a prose lampoon called A Hue and cry after Dismal and in T[o]l[a]nd’s Invitation to Dismal, to Dine with the Calves-Head Club (both 1712; both 1d*†), the latter a piece of political exultation disparaging a number of leading Whigs by name. In 1711, the Oxford ministry seemed vulnerable—but Marlborough had not managed to bring the ministry down, and Nottingham’s defection had not converted other Tories to the Whig cause. By the time Swift wrote this poem, the ministry was a whole lot more secure. T[o]l[a]nd’s Invitation is snidely exultant, but it is not just a piece of merry triumphalism. The satire is also a familiar and fervent denigration of the Whigs as radicals. The free-thinking Toland invites Dismal to join him and his fellow Whigs/traitors, and again the treachery is put in the mouth of the target: “At Monarchy we nobly shew our Spight, / And talk what Fools call Treason all the Night” (ll. 15-16). Swift is smearing Nottingham and his new political

117 Ellis, POAS-Y, 7:524; Swift, Journal to Stella, 2:430.
118 Swift takes another shot at Nottingham (“double-Dismal”) in Peace and Dunkirk; being an Excellent New Song upon the Surrender of Dunkirk to General Hill (a 1712 broadside), which also mocks the fallen Godolphin (“Old Godolphin full of Spleen, / Made false Moves, and lost his QUEEN”) and other prominent Whigs (ll. 12, 15-16).
119 See Ellis, POAS-Y, 7:560.
brethren; he is also writing as “chef de propagande of the Harley-St John administration” and at least implicitly upholding the political status quo.¹²⁹

One of the threats to the Oxford ministry in 1711 had been Marlborough, and Swift’s execration of him in The Fable of Midas (1712; 1d†) is more a piece of defensive propaganda than malicious lampoonery. Marlborough returned from a victorious campaign in 1711 and promptly began agitating against the Tory ministry. In particular, he pushed for the continuation of the war, challenging Oxford’s promotion of peace; when he voted against the peace preliminaries in December 1711, his fate was effectively sealed. Anne pressed him to support the peace proposals, and when he refused she summarily dismissed him from his offices.¹²¹ Marlborough’s disgrace was not unproblematic for the Tory ministry. In England he was a popular war hero, and he had been effective as a diplomat; his public shame risked weakening the support for peace. That the ministry did not greatly suffer from the dismissal, Ellis argues, “may be attributed in part to a careful plan of propaganda” against the fallen favorite.¹²² The Fable of Midas belongs to that anti-Marlborough campaign. Swift retells the story of Midas and then identifies his descendent in “a certain Leader.”

That Virtue in the Fingers ends:
What else by Perquisites are meant,
By Pensions, Bribes, and three per Cent?
By Places and Commissions sold,
And turning Dung it self to Gold? (ll. 42, 44-48)

The “British Midas”—who “now neglected stands”—has, Swift insists, both “Asses Ears, and dirty Hands” (ll. 70, 81, 82). Swift’s vilification of Marlborough, whom he regarded as avaricious and unprincipled, is personally nasty, but it is also purposively detractive. He is attempting to besmirch a

¹²⁹ The phrase is Hermann J. Real’s, used in discussion of The Winds[or Prophecy but more broadly applicable to Swift’s role in the last years of Queen Anne. See “‘The Most Fateful Piece Swift ever Wrote’: The Windsor Prophecy,” Swift Studies 9 (1994): 76-99, at 77.
¹²² Ellis, POAS-Y, 7:553.
political rival whose popularity threatened to undermine the ministry and the cause in which he seriously believed.\textsuperscript{123}

Swift’s best known piece of propaganda is \textit{The Conduct of the Allies} (1711; 1s), a pamphlet promoting peace—that is, advocating what was negotiated two years later as the Treaty of Utrecht.\textsuperscript{124} Evidently Swift’s argument had practical effect. In the \textit{Journal to Stella}, he boasts that, “the Resolutions printed t’other day in the Votes, are almost quotations from it; and would never have passed, if that book had not been written” (2:482). Matthew Hodgart has suggested—probably rightly—that, “more by persuasive argument than by satire,” \textit{The Conduct of the Allies} had won votes for the Peace.\textsuperscript{125} The substance of the essay is persuasive polemic, no less a weighty argument than Dunton’s \textit{King-Abigail} or Defoe’s \textit{Jure Divino}. Like those authors, Swift is passing judgment. He ferociously denounces the war-mongering Whig opposition, the Allies, and the entire war effort.\textsuperscript{126} I doubt that Swift thought of this essay as satire, but it does represent the sort of polemical aggression that he practiced in his early career.

Swift’s responses to Steele in 1714 are just as politically argumentative as \textit{The Conduct of the Allies} and more sharply satirical. In \textit{The Crisis}, Steele had defended the Revolution principles and the Protestant succession; on the eve of Anne’s death, he loudly claimed that the church was in danger from the Pretender and argued for the legality of a Hanoverian monarch. Calhoun Winton describes Steele’s

\textsuperscript{123} Another example of apparently purposive detraction is \textit{The W[in]ds[o]r Prophecy} (1711), a mock-prophecy warning the Queen to dismiss the Duchess of Somerset. Much the best discussion of this poem is Real’s “‘The Most Fateful Piece Swift ever Wrote’.” He explains the controversy around the piece, and in particular highlights the purposiveness of Swift’s satire: “Whoever wants to get to grips with \textit{The Windsor Prophecy} had better work from the assumption that Swift was not playing a wantonly (self-) destructive game out of sarcasm, malice, and spite. On the contrary, there is evidence that he sincerely wished to serve his country at a time of acute political crisis when, he felt, nothing less than England’s future was at stake” (83).

\textsuperscript{124} Sales of this piece were evidently tremendous, despite the fact that the pamphlet cost a shilling (roughly £10-£15 in present-day terms). The first edition of a thousand copies sold out within two days, and the printer rushed a second edition into print. See the Textual Account of this work in vol. 7 of the Cambridge edition of Swift’s \textit{English Political Writings 1711-14: The Conduct of the Allies and Other Works}, ed. Bertrand A. Goldgar and Ian Gadd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), esp pp. 341-42. Swift himself comments on the popularity of his work: “They are now printing the fourth edition, which is reckoned very extraordinary, considering ‘tis a dear twelve-penny book, and not bought up in numbers by the party to give away, as the Whigs do, but purely upon it’s own strength” (\textit{Journal to Stella}, 2:430).


sort of propaganda as “the hortatory, the viewing-with-alarm, the call for a return to first principles”—
and, he points out, the “pomposity was too much for Swift.” The Protestant succession, Winton observes,
was an issue “which the Tories could not comfortably dispute. The obvious course, then, was to discredit
the author of the offending publication,”¹²⁷ and so Swift does in The First Ode of the Second Book of
Horace Paraphras’d (3d). Published before the appearance of The Crisis, the First Ode is a response to
the advertising campaign which preceded Steele’s pamphlet.¹²⁸ Swift does not challenge the argument of
The Crisis but mocks its author, who “pompously wilt let us know / What all the World knew long
ago”—that is, “That we a German Prince must own / When A[N] for Heav’n resigns Her Throne” (ll. 7-
8, 11-12). He then banteringly advises Steele to return to Drury Lane after he has “settled Europe’s
Grand Affairs” (l. 40). The object of the First Ode is to deflate the credibility of a political antagonist, in
this case before publication of his argument.

The Publick Spirit of the Whigs: Set forth in their Generous Encouragement of the Author of the
Crisis (1714; 1s) is a point-by-point refutation of The Crisis, alternately teasing, parodying, and savaging
its author. Irvin Ehrenpreis describes the pamphlet as Swift’s “final defense of the Oxford ministry,” and
as a remarkably un-Swiftian satire. “There are no hoaxes here, no impersonation, no self-ridicule, no
elaborate, satirical fantasies. The voice throughout is the true author’s. . . . So far from playing clever
games with Steele’s propositions or willfully misunderstanding them, Swift’s regular (though not
invariable) procedure is to cut down the implications and innuendos to simple language and then refute
them as squarely and openly as he can.”¹²⁹ The Publick Spirit of the Whigs is straightforward, defensive,
argumentative, and purposively defamatory.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Winton, Captain Steele: The Early Career of Richard Steele (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1964),
195, 198.
¹²⁸ Winton describes what happened between the conception of The Crisis and its eventual publication,
including the zealous promotion just before its appearance (Captain Steele, 185-96).
¹²⁹ Ehrenpreis, Swift, the Man, his Works, and the Age, 2:705-06.
¹³⁰ Swift caused trouble for himself in this piece when he denounced the Scottish nobility, mocking the
whole race, and grumbling about the Union. See especially pp. 49-51, in The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift, vol. 8:
Scottish peers clamored for the prosecution of the author, and the Whigs were glad to press the issue. The
Swift’s Irish tracts are aggressive, castigatory calls for political action—but are they satires? Several satire scholars have at least mentioned the Drapier’s Letters (1724-25), written to strengthen Irish resistance to Wood’s half-pence, but Griffin is probably correct in suggesting that “we should read them not as satire but as polemic that makes local use of satire.”\textsuperscript{131} A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture (1720) is another borderline case. The essay calls for an Irish boycott of all English goods: Swift exhorts the Irish “never to appear with one single Shred that comes from England,” but instead to be “universally clad in their own Manufacture.”\textsuperscript{132} The essay is, in Nokes’s phrasing, “vibrant with the sense of injustice,” thundering against the English oppression and Irish passivity.\textsuperscript{133} This is a call for action, laced with bitter ridicule, but it is not really satirical. Swift’s verse follow-up to the proposal, An Excellent new Song on a seditious Pamphlet (1720), is more mockingly satiric. The Irish have clearly ignored his entreaty: “We’ll buy English Silks for our Wives and our Daughters, / In Spight of his Deanship and Journeyman Waters” (ll. 8-9). Irishmen are not indifferent to but enraged by “the Dean’s Book,” knowing that their wives “grow sullen / At wearing of Woollen” (ll. 24, 14-15). In the poem’s last lines, the imprudent Irish anticipate the worst for their would-be liberator. If the printer betrays him, he will be arrested, leaving them to buy English silks without recrimination. The Excellent new Song expresses Swift’s usual moral and political outrage at English treatment of Ireland, just as it reflects his resentful exasperation with the Irish. He also jeers at the authorities and “flaunt[s] the open secret of his authorship of the Proposal.”\textsuperscript{134}

Swift’s satiric objects in the works hitherto surveyed—the nastily destructive satires and the more purposive pieces of defamation—are relatively clear. He refutes, decries, defends, mocks, and

\textsuperscript{131} Griffin, Satire, 151. Rosenheim denied the presence of satire in these letters: “what seems to be lacking, insofar as satire is concerned, is the palpable but vital fiction which transforms polemic into satire and in which ingenious falsehood is indispensable to the disclosure of truth” (Swift and the Satirist’s Art, 169).


\textsuperscript{133} Nokes, Jonathan Swift, A Hypocrite Reversed, 266.

\textsuperscript{134} Nokes, Jonathan Swift, A Hypocrite Reversed, 268.
propagandizes. Swift is easy to find in these works, his authorial position not obscured to the point at which readers can no longer be certain where they are or why. He is varyingly ironic and straightforward, explicit and implicit, but neither the target nor the nature of the satire is particularly elusive. Other satires—of which A Tale of a Tub is the most obvious example—are much less clear-cut. The source and extent of the difficulties they pose are not uniform, but, in one way or another, they all require more of the reader.

Indirection and difficult satire

Swift’s most famous satire of this period is also his most disorienting one—A Tale of a Tub (1704; 4s‡) is dizzying, referred to by its author as simply “the &c.” The Tale is obviously not only an attack. If it were, it would be much more fully explained by analyses of Swift’s satire on abuses in religion and learning. The speaker is a modern hack dissenter who sometimes speaks Swift’s truth and who more often reveals himself as untrustworthy, illogical, unreasonable, and mad. The parable of the three brothers is relatively easy to follow, and the ridicule of Peter (Roman Catholicism) and Jack (Calvinism) is undeniable. But is Swift defending or deriding the Anglican Church? Twentieth-century scholars, aided by authorial contexts, cannot agree on an answer to that question. Contemporary readers of the anonymous text would have been on even shakier ground. What they would have made of the satire probably depends largely on their predispositions and reasons for reading it; a fair number of its original readers must have been thoroughly befuddled. In Swift’s anti-Marlborough propaganda and elsewhere, he makes his position comprehensible; the effect and force of the satiric argument depend upon clear rendering of judgment. That the Tale is doing something different is thumpingly obvious—though no one has ever been able to say with any certainty what that something is. Edward Rosenheim’s verdict of 1963 seems dead on: “the identification of particular satiric victims is a piecemeal procedure, during which, if anything, whatever satiric ‘unity’ the work may claim tends to disappear.” The “umbrella-terms under which we try to subsume” the multiple targets, he continues, quickly “become inadequate or
meaningless.”¹³⁵ One important point is that interpretation of the satire depends largely upon how it is read and by whom. This is not straightforward transmission of satiric judgment.¹³⁶ A large part of the satiric effect comes from the technique and from the experience of reading.

Are Swift’s Bickerstaff pamphlets (1708-09) a practical joke, a humorous burlesque, or a biting satire on Partridge and astrology? No doubt Swift enjoyed the prank, but as several critics have pointed out, Partridge was not simply a nonsensical quack. He was championing everything that Swift despised, and decrying all that Swift supported: he abused the high church, vigorously protested the bill against occasional conformity, and ardently defended the dissenters.¹³⁷ Swift’s satire is not a social entertainment, Judith C. Mueller argues, but a “defense of established authority,” a pointed attempt to discredit a loud proponent of the unorthodoxy that Swift abominated.¹³⁸ Moreover, as Ronald Paulson rightly concludes, the satire is also “on the crowd, the reader who accepted the news of Partridge’s death,” and more broadly on “the tendency of people to take whatever appears in print . . . as gospel truth.”¹³⁹ Again, Swift’s purposes are not only punitive but also instructive—the satires on Partridge expose the potential for printed untruths and (therefore) the dangers of being an uncritical reader. “The Bickerstaff controversy,” Robert Phiddian contends, “is not about truth. It is about plausibility and about verification.”¹⁴⁰ Did Swift—like Defoe and others—mean for his satire to provoke thought and even discomfiture? That seems possible, even in such a playful set of satires as the Bickerstaff pieces.

How seriously are we meant to take the Tale and the Bickerstaff papers? Both pieces are in some ways very funny works, though Weinbrot has recently issued a salutary reminder of “the Tale’s deep

¹³⁵ Rosenheim, Swift and the Satirist’s Art, 66-67.
¹³⁷ See, for example, Ehrenpreis, Swift, the Man, his Works, and the Age, 2:198-99.
One point is worth remembering. The author of the Tale was essentially an obscure non-entity who had no practice at managing complicated satiric writing. Samuel Johnson was right to reflect that nothing in Swift’s later writing is “like” the Tale. That Swift simply failed to control his satiric argument (or effect) is if not a likelihood at least a strong possibility. Another is that the “strategy of mystification” to which Downie refers is a deliberate attempt to unsettle or even unnerve the readers, or that it is merely a game played by a technical experimentalist—highly doubtful, given what we know about Swift, but not unthinkable. Conceiving of Swift’s Bickerstaff satires as part of a spirited jest is more plausible, but Partridge was no mere joke. He was a political enemy. The Tale and the Bickerstaff works are showpieces of Swiftian irony, and they both have real bite, albeit of a different sort. In these satires, Swift might very well be trying to make a point about the possibilities for deception, about the untrustworthiness of even those speakers who are sometimes (sort of) right, and about the need for readers to cultivate perspicacity. Swift’s other difficult satires of this period are the answer to Anthony Collins and the Argument against Abolishing Christianity, both striking displays of Swift’s irony but quite unlike either the Tale or the Bickerstaff pamphlets.

Swift responds (anonymously) to Collins in Mr. C[ollins]s Discourse of Free-Thinking, Put into plain English (1713; 4d)—but he does not do what he was to do to Steele in The Publick Spirit of the Whigs. He does not rebut. His strategy is paraphrase, a form of impersonation practiced by Defoe, Maynwaring, and other religio-political satirists in this quarter century. Swift restates Collins’s views—with distortion, tactical omissions, and amplifications—and translates the free-thinker’s careful reasoning into canting drivel. The garbled paraphrase presumably serves to reveal the illogic of the original. The

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141 Weinbrot, Menippean Satire Reconsidered, 146.
142 In his life of Swift, Johnson reflects that the Tale “has little resemblance to his other pieces,” and “is of a mode so distinct and peculiar, that it must be considered by itself; what is true of that, is not true of any thing else which he has written.” See The Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets, ed. Lonsdale, 3:208.
143 Downie, Jonathan Swift: Political Writer, 92.
144 Weinbrot calls attention to the troubling effect of this satire, and to Swift’s “delicate balance between amusing and frightening his reader.” The Tale’s penultimate section, he points out, is unsettling, ending “with the Church of England on the run, Dissent in authority over much of the nation, and the Modern narrator in authority over his imprisoned reader” (Menippean Satire Reconsidered, 127, 159).
piece is “a virtuoso deconstruction of the Discourse’s integrity,” Phiddian concludes, in which readers “are taken inside Collins’ discursive world and shown it without the window-dressing and concealments that hide its ‘true’ implications from public view. We are taken beneath its veneer of plausibility, to see its errors enacted while simultaneously we learn to reject them.” What are Swift’s aims in this satiric paraphrase? Obviously, Collins is the principal butt of the joke, though Swift also associates the Whigs with Collins’s radical free-thinking. He rubbishes Collins, but he is not merely passing judgment: like some of the self-exposure satires discussed in section II, this piece does more than ridicule. Translating a text “into plain English” inevitably calls into question the true meaning of the original. Swift translates, “politicizes,” and “nonsensifies” Collins, and his response makes plain the potential for inauthenticity, duplicity, and misleading eloquence. Part of the lesson—for those inclined to see it—is the necessity of critical reading, the need to apply reason to the arguments with which one is presented.

Swift’s indirection in An Argument against Abolishing Christianity (wr. 1708; pub. 1711) is if anything more problematic. The piece was occasioned by the agitation for the repeal of the Test Act in Ireland, a campaign unwelcome to an Anglican committed to the wholesale denial of civil rights for all non-Anglicans. For Swift, abolishing the Test Act was tantamount to abolishing Christianity—though, as Ellis justly observes, the connection that was obvious to him would have been anything but clear to his readers. Even if Swift had published the piece in 1708, says Ellis, “the argument against repealing the test clause in Ireland would have been so deeply buried in anonymity and allegory that his powerful Whig

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148 The full title is An Argument To prove, That the Abolishing of Christianity in England, May, as Things now Stand, be attended with some Inconveniencies, and perhaps, not produce those many good Effects proposed thereby.
friends would not have been able to penetrate the disguise.”\textsuperscript{149} The level and completeness of the piece’s irony is hard to determine, and Swift’s relationship to his speaker is complicated and unstable. The narrator is manifestly untrustworthy. Edward A. and Lillian D. Bloom have pointed out that, as the anti-abolitionist moves through his argument, “he unconsciously proves his reliability suspect, his propositions specious, and his religious motives reducible to hypocritical self-seeking.”\textsuperscript{150} As in a Tale, Swift’s speaker is a modern. He is part of the problem rather than the voice of reason and resolution, though he is not systematically and consistently satirized.

The narrator of the Argument seeks to rebut a proposal for abolishing Christianity, though he also emphasizes that what he wishes to retain is not real but nominal Christianity—that is, the hypocrisy Swift ironically advocates in the Project for the Advancement of Religion.

I hope, no Reader imagines me so weak as to stand up in the Defence of real Christianity; such as used in primitive Times (if we may believe the Authors of those Ages) to have an Influence upon Mens Belief and Actions: To offer at the Restoring of that, would indeed be a wild Project; it would be to dig up Foundations; to destroy at one Blow all the Wit, and half the Learning of the Kingdom; to break the entire Frame and Constitution of Things; to ruin Trade, extinguish Arts and Sciences with the Professors of them; in short, to turn our Courts, Exchanges and Shops into Desarts.\textsuperscript{151}

The anti-abolitionist defends nominal Christianity on purely pragmatic grounds: its removal will hurt society. “Read superficially,” Nokes argues, “the Argument attacks hypocrisy by . . . ‘defending’ the residual utilitarian functions of religious institutions in a society whose ethos and impetus are to be found elsewhere.” If the Argument is ironic, then what does that mean? Swift describes a world in which hypocrisy is customary; he at once proposes and ridicules the retention of Christianity in name only.\textsuperscript{152}


\textsuperscript{150} Bloom and Bloom, Satire’s Persuasive Voice (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 97.


\textsuperscript{152} Nokes, Jonathan Swift, A Hypocrite Reversed, 101. Nokes concludes that the Argument will not “inspire sudden conversions,” but that at best “it may at least instill a little self-knowledge and humility.” Ehrenpreis is less sanguine, and probably closer to right: Swift is both “hopeful pastor” (leading Christians to salvation) and realistic clown (who knows that they cannot be led). “The satirist,” says Ehrenpreis, “is satirizing himself,” reflecting Swift’s “conviction that the noblest of all causes was a lost cause” (Swift, the Man, his Works, and the Age, 2:284-85).
Obviously Swift is not really championing the preservation of Christianity in name only, but that he believed a return to “real” Christian practice was possible is highly unlikely. What is he advocating here? What are his purposes, beyond an oblique and obscure defense of the Test Act? He is, of course, also seeking to undercut those who from his point of view represent threats to the Established Church, including deists, atheists, and dissenters. Another target, as Ian Higgins has recently observed, are the Socinians, the most prominent anti-Trinitarians in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England. The polemical intention behind Swift’s parody is not in question—but, as in the case of his response to Collins, he is doing more than simply conveying an opinion or passing judgment.

Why does Swift use indirection in his early satire? The question no doubt seems a strange one to ask of someone celebrated for impenetrable ironies and insoluble difficulties. The Tale still leaves readers mystified, and Gulliver has inspired an evidently insoluble critical tangle. The majority of his early satires, however, are relatively straightforward. The exceptions are the Tale, the Bickerstaff pamphlets, Mr. C[olli]ns’s Discourse, and the Argument—all published within a span of nine years, during the decade and a half of irony discussed above, and all definitely non-straightforward. On what issues does Swift employ indirection? As I argued in section II, religio-political satirists of the day tend to use impersonation and self-exposure in responses to subjects concerning high- versus low-church controversies, dissent and occasional conformity. Dissenters warn their brethren not to believe in high-church eloquence; high-church advocates try to demonstrate that the nonconformists’ cant is a cover for treasonous schemes.

Swift’s most difficult satires all deal, after a fashion, with religious controversy. This is probably not a coincidence. Michael F. Suarez has argued that readers of Swiftian satire are pressed not only to judge the particular target, but to “form a series of deeper judgments about language, religion, and

153 Higgins, “An Argument against Abolishing Christianity and its Contexts,” in Reading Swift: Papers from The Fifth Münster Symposium on Jonathan Swift, ed. Hermann J. Real (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2008), 203-23. Higgins rightly points out that the Argument includes a combination of “comic élan” and “real alarm,” the latter resulting from the fact that, “As far as High Churchmen were concerned, the abolishing of Christianity was being proposed in print” (203, 207).
politics, and about the operations of human vice and virtue that govern these activities in others and in ourselves.” Suarez suggests that “wisdom and critical discernment” are “the allied goals of Swift’s satires,” and that Swift’s “moral purpose” is to equip “readers to see through the world’s deceits.”

I doubt the pertinence of this description to all of Swift’s output, but for the indirect satires in particular Suarez’s conclusions seem fruitful. Swift’s object, in that case, is startlingly like Defoe’s in some of his satires, however different the aims and allegiances of those two writers. Like Defoe and other religio-political satirists of this quarter century, Swift uses indirection to demonstrate the possibilities of deception and the problems of credulity. I suspect that he is trying to educate readers (after a fashion) in these satires, though he evidently had a great deal less faith than Defoe in his ability to do so—or, rather, in his readers’ ability to appreciate, comprehend, or benefit from the education.

I am less interested here in generating new and improved readings of Swift’s satires (probably we long ago understood them about as well as we are ever going to) than in suggesting that he has been miscontextualized in modern satire studies as an “Augustan” and “Scriblerian” writer. The culture of satire in this quarter century includes satiric impersonation, ironic self-exposure, technical experimentation, and deliberately disorienting satire. Swift is much the most brilliant practitioner of this sort of satire, but he is far from anomalous. This is the world to which he belongs, and these are his satiric contexts. The Tale is usually regarded as a “pre-Scriblerian” enterprise; it gets twinned with Gulliver’s Travels as pinnacles of achievement; its author is almost always viewed as a great literary satirist and an ally of Pope, Gay, and Arbuthnot. Like them, he has literary and cultural concerns, though his religious concerns separate him from those writers. His friendship with Pope and company notwithstanding, what they are doing in the early eighteenth century is ultimately irrelevant to what he is doing. Forcing Swift into a “Scriblerian” pigeonhole grossly misrepresents his early career as a satirist.

In the early eighteenth century, Swift writes a great deal of both verse and prose, uses different techniques, is varying direct and indirect. He sometimes writes to protect the status quo, as in The Tale

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Fable of Midas, and sometimes vehemently to oppose it, as in An Excellent new Song on a seditious Pamphlet. Swiftian satire tends to be associated with negativity, but several of these works have clear positives, whether or not they are overtly expressed; the degree to which Swift writes defensive satire has been underestimated. He is certainly capable of gratuitous nastiness, or of grumpy and plaintive commentary on a sad state of affairs; he is also a tenacious activist, manifestly concerned to influence the present and productively to discredit those he finds threatening to what he supports. Swift can be cleverly funny, violently abusive, markedly anxious. He is by modern standards a religious bigot, and he is a superbly effective propagandist. Sometimes both a preacher and a clown, he cries for reform and mocks himself for doing so. In technical range, he shares much with Defoe and other religio-political satirists of the early eighteenth century—denouncing, propagandizing, complaining, implicitly or explicitly defending a cause, allowing his targets to expose themselves, and so on. Playful dedications to “Prince Posterity” notwithstanding, Swift’s early satires are gritty politically and his hands are often dirty; he goes after individuals at Oxford’s nod. His politics and friendships are more respectable than Defoe’s, and his skepticism more welcome to modern scholars than Defoe’s Puritanism; unlike Defoe, he did not have to write for bread. Nevertheless, Swift belongs to the world of POAS—a culture of largely anonymous lampoonists, propagandists, and muckrakers, of party men whose satiric motives and satiric concerns are a universe apart from the ill-defined preoccupations of the “Scriblerus Club.”

VI. Characterizing the early eighteenth century

Among the most recent attempts to characterize early eighteenth-century satire is that of Ruben Quintero, who argues that these years represent

an especially innovative time for satire in both prose and poetry, as satiric authors openly experiment within all genres for more effective ways to instruct savvy readers about folly and human nature. When normative values are not clearly understood, satiric art will be loud, divisive, and combative, for it is only upon accepted values that recognition of the ridiculous is premised. We cannot know what is absurd unless we know, or believe we

155 See Ehrenpreis, Swift, Swift, the Man, his Works, and the Age, 2:284-85. This theme has been discussed at length by Peter Steele in Jonathan Swift: Preacher and Jester (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).
know, what is, or would be, reasonable, and this period developed a firm sense of what it considered ethically reasonable. It is this common ground of perceived understanding that makes the eighteenth century one of the richest periods of satire in any language.\textsuperscript{156}

Quintero is right to insist on satiric innovation in this period, though his analysis does little to demonstrate the new directions of English satire. That eighteenth-century writers and readers shared a “common ground of perceived understanding” is a hypothesis hard to test, but my main reservation is that Quintero’s account, though alluring in its tidiness and eloquence, is functionally irrelevant to what actually goes on in early eighteenth-century satire. Approbation of ethical consensus does nothing to describe the dynamic satiric culture of the period. To what works does this description apply? Pope had a strong sense of what was ethically reasonable, and he is Quintero’s centerpiece—but if we are going to do any justice to early eighteenth-century satire, then we need to be talking about particulars.

Those particulars just do not reduce to tidy verities. The sheer quantity of satiric output in this quarter century is worth appreciating—I found upwards of 250 satires. We need also to understand the technical experimentation of its practitioners, the range in method, conceived audience, and apparent purpose for writing. Some satirists are denunciatory and some didactic, but the material cannot be divided neatly into Swift/Pope and Addison/Steele. “Attack” includes wanton punishment of enemies, calculated campaigns against political powerhouses, and moralistic blanket scoldings of English society. Some fifty monitory satires appear in a span of less than a decade and a half (most of them dating from the period 1704-11), and together they represent a phenomenon I had not foreseen at the outset of this investigation. Satirists as different as Swift and Defoe regularly attempt to instill capability as well as to convey knowledge; others use satire as a form of philosophical inquiry and social critique; yet others raise big questions about the structure of politics and the legality and legitimacy of political authority. What makes early eighteenth-century satire so spectacular is not, or not only, the genius of its most beloved practitioners or the supposed ethical consensus of its readers and writers. The most conspicuous feature of these years is the multiplicity of satiric practices.

Modern scholars have tended to assume the inevitability of *Gulliver’s Travels*, *The Dunciad*, and *The Beggar’s Opera*—and so have too often mined this quarter century for happy harbingers of the “Scriblerian” heyday, ignoring the many other satires that fit the “Scriblerian” model not at all. The satiric productions of Pope, Gay, and Arbuthnot are a long way from representative of the culture in which they were written. Pope’s and Gay’s works jar especially badly against that which is, if not predominant, at least prominent in this period—namely, the religio-political satires produced by Defoe, Swift, and the satirists surveyed in section II. Granting the peculiarity of the *Tale*, Swift is much more a part of his satiric milieu than Pope or Gay, who are basically misfits. We have a problem of perspective: Defoe is all but unmentioned in accounts of early eighteenth-century satire, and the “Scriblerians” represent a putatively unified titanic force. An informed English reader in 1725 would probably have regarded Defoe as a long-standing major player, Swift as a brilliant oddball now in the obscurity of exile, and the other so-called “Scriblerians” as only peripherally relevant to satiric practice. The truth is that such a reader, asked to forecast the near future of English satire, could not have guessed what was about to happen. The canonical masterpieces of the late 1720s and 1730s were by no means obvious, necessary, and right. From the vantage point of contemporaries, they were neither predictable nor even probable.
Chapter 6
Harsh and Sympathetic Satire, 1726-1745

The years between the publication of *Gulliver’s Travels* and the deaths of Pope and Swift are usually hailed as the high moment of eighteenth-century satire, and not without reason. *Gulliver and A Modest Proposal;* the *Dunciads, Moral Essays, and Horatian imitations; The Beggar’s Opera;* Fielding’s plays, *Shamela,* and *Jonathan Wild;* Johnson’s *London*—this is without doubt a prodigious period in the history of English satire. Here we arrive at the span of years from which most modern notions of eighteenth-century satire are derived; the themes that have been emphasized by satire scholars (e.g., vilification of Walpole, bitter complaint about burgeoning Grub Street culture, denunciation of cultural decay) deserve the notice they have received. The big-time satires have been dealt with often and competently, and I see no reason to quarrel with my predecessors over interpretations of those works, but I do think some questions need to be asked about satire in this period and about its most studied practitioners.

The questions have to do with four basic concerns. (1) In terms of satiric practice, scholars tend not to distinguish much between the first and second quarters of the eighteenth century. What happens in satire from 1726 to 1745, and how much continuity is there between satiric practice in this period and the previous quarter century? (2) Pope, Swift, and Gay are often treated as a satiric triumvirate who share a life-changing commitment to the “Scriblerian” mission and who devote their satiric energies to attacking a common enemy. How similar are the enterprises of these three satirists? (3) *Gulliver’s Travels* is the best-known and most widely-read satire of the eighteenth century, and it has received an extraordinary amount of critical attention—and yet precious little consensus has been reached even on some very fundamental issues of interpretation. What is the nature of Swift’s satire in the *Travels,* and what is its connection to the culture of satire in this period? (4) Henry Fielding is almost always seen as a would-be “Scriblerian,” tenaciously striving to emulate his betters, whatever his temperamental differences from those writers. He writes a lot of satire throughout the second quarter of the eighteenth century: if we
refrain from imposing our theories of “Augustanism” on him, and from assuming his debt to Pope’s cohort, what sort of satirist do we find him to be?

The reader will hardly be astonished to discover that radical shifts occurred in the later 1720s. Consequently, we will once again have to abandon a set of categories that we have become accustomed to using, and adapt ourselves to a new set of distinctions. Plus ça change.

I. Pope and Swift among their contemporaries

In chapter 5, I surveyed the period from roughly 1700 to 1725, deliberately stopping just prior to what J. Paul Hunter has called “the peak of the Augustan moment,” that three-year span in which three of the most celebrated satires of the long eighteenth century appeared.¹ Gulliver’s Travels, The Beggar’s Opera, and the first Dunciad are—as should be clear from the previous chapter—without precedent in the earlier eighteenth century. Far from representing the inevitable culmination of an evolving tradition of satire, they come virtually out of nowhere. Is the discontinuity between the first and second quarters of the century evident only in these radically innovative satires? Another way of asking that question: do the types I surveyed in chapter 5 continue as before with relatively little change, or do they transmogrify or abruptly disappear?

Certainly some connection exists between these two periods—satirists complain, mock, denounce—but the carry-over from the first to the second quarter of this century is startlingly limited. Trying to put the material of the late twenties and thirties into the pigeonholes appropriate for the works of the previous twenty-five years would produce ludicrous results. (Whether that is because the satirists of the 1730s are trying to write Gulliver, The Dunciad, and The Beggar’s Opera will have to be determined.) Some prominent satirists are obviously active in both periods, as Swift is, but their practice shifts noticeably. No one in this quarter century does anything, in satiric terms, “like” Defoe, Maynwaring, or Dunton, and one of the most exciting developments of the 1700-25 period—monitory

satire—has effectively disappeared well before the mid-twenties. Satirists of the late 1720s and 1730s do not practice the kind of dense ideological argumentation that was a conspicuous part of religio-political satire. Something changes. The reasons for that change are not obvious, probably not simple, and ultimately beyond the responsibility—or at least the powers—of the humble student of the history of satire. What I can say on the basis of fact is that people write different sorts of satire in the second quarter of the century than they had in the first. This marked discontinuity raises a big question: can satire be traced in generic fashion (supposing that authors are consciously operating in a particular genre with rules and norms), or does one need to go from work to work without assuming the sequential connectives whose existence critics have almost always taken for granted?

The discontinuity in this period is not only a matter of a few innovative headliners bursting forth \textit{ex nihilo}—the culture of satire alters in major and not wholly explicable ways. We do not find the sort of radical and widespread technical experimentation current in the first twenty-five years of the century. What do we find? The “job” of satire is far from uniform in this period: satirists write to attack, to punish, to complain, to defend or support, to reform (at least putatively), to dissuade or persuade, to instruct, and so on. Nevertheless, satiric objectives are much less diverse than in the previous quarter century. What is exciting about this material is tonal fluctuation, the varying intensities with which writers respond to a relatively small and contained set of issues. I have subdivided the survey into thematic categories—political, cultural, and social satire—and within each I highlight the range in tone, intensity, and level of apparent authorial conviction to be found. Political satirists are sometimes amusing themselves and their like-minded readers, sometimes plaintive or antagonistic, and sometimes thoroughly cynical and despairing. Some cultural satirists cheerfully deflate or parody their enemies (as Fielding does in \textit{The Tragedy of Tragedies}), others sharply deride (Pope in the first \textit{Dunciad}), and yet others solemnly denounce cultural collapse (Pope in the last \textit{Dunciad}). Social satirists mockingly tease their targets, express not uncritical sympathy, lament human folly with different degrees of sourness, or shrilly revile society and its members. These distinctions are simple-minded and uncontroversial—few people would suggest that \textit{The Tragedy of Tragedies} is tonally “like” the last \textit{Dunciad}—but satire scholars have
tended to privilege form and content with singularly little sensitivity to tone and intensity. The interpretation of tone is admittedly to some extent subjective, but the point is not that a particular work is “extremely harsh” or “mildly gloomy.” The point is the wide degree of tonal variation.

A word of warning is in order before I begin the survey. With the exception of *Gulliver’s Travels*, the canonical satires of this period have mostly been pretty well understood. In analytic terms, I can add little to how we read them. Pope’s major works in particular have been carefully analyzed, and I see no point to repeating agreed-upon readings in any detail. What this means is that I do not give special weight to Pope’s Moral Essays or Horatian imitations. Instead I refer to his works—along with those of Swift, Gay, Fielding, and Johnson—in much the same fashion that I refer to the satires of Henry Carey, Paul Whitehead, Robert Dodsley, and others. They first group comprises great and important examples, but they are only examples. Another awkward problem: Pope, Swift, and Gay are substantially different both from what goes on around them and from each other. That uniqueness confounds even crude efforts at categorization. To try to force their satires into pigeonholes that do not satisfactorily accommodate them risks misrepresenting them; to treat this “Scriblerian” trio entirely separately from the broader culture of satire implies a likeness among them that is yet more distortive. My aims in this section are to demonstrate the range of satiric practice in this period and to show where Pope, Swift, and Gay belong in their contemporary contexts. To do so, I have decided to deal with their works in the categories that seem the most appropriate—or the least inappropriate—and to be as clear as possible about the nature and limitations of the fit.

*Political commentary and combat*

The Walpole era is famous for its divisiveness. In the early 1720s, satirist after unhappy satirist disparaged the “Skreenmaster” for shielding the ministry from investigation into the disaster of the South Sea Bubble. Disapproval turned to abhorrence in 1727: when George I died and Walpole managed to stay in power, his detractors were both astonished and infuriated. The Great Man grew ever greater—ever more corrupt, from his adversaries’ point of view—and looked as though he would preside until he
dropped. Oppositional satirists became louder and louder, and ever more irascible, throughout the 1730s and up to the minister’s fall in 1742. They heaped scorn upon Walpole and grumbled venomously about the unscrupulous machinations—Fielding’s “Pollitricks”—associated with his regime. No doubt alert to the prospect of patronage, Walpole’s supporters duly rebuked the “false patriots” as ungrateful malcontents and disappointed placemongers. The political warfare of the Robinocracy has been much studied, and my aim here is to characterize tone and type of satiric enterprise rather than to analyze political content. I am trying to be representative but not exhaustive in my coverage.

*Lightweight political satire.* Few political satirists in the Walpole era find humor in state affairs, but some satires are undoubtedly more the stuff of entertainment than of partisan abuse. Scholars of political satire have been much more inclined to over- than to under-estimate the political import of the works they have studied. Fielding’s plays were long ago mined for systematic anti-ministerial satire, most of which turned out to be imaginary; subsequent critics have usefully labored to counter over-politicized readings. *Tom Thumb* is no longer taken as a slashing attack on the Great Man; that the topicality of *The Author’s Farce* does not add up to a political position is now more or less understood. On those plays, more in due course. The example of political satire with which I want to deal here is *The Welsh Opera* (1731), a lively little entertainment full of slapstick and good-humored lèse-majesté.

Fielding presents us with the affable Welsh Squire Ap-Shinken (King George), his wife (Queen Caroline), their son, Master Owen (the Prince of Wales), Robin the Butler (Walpole), and William the Groom (Pulteney). The plot is slight and the happy resolution thoroughly far-fetched. The exchanges between

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2 Satiric examples are many, but see *The Oak, and the Dunghill. A Fable* (1728), *The Levy-Haunter, A Satire* (1729), and *The Citizen’s Procession, or, the Smugler’s Success and the Patriots Disappointment* (1733; 4d), and *A Satire* (1734). The author of the last is particularly high-toned, invoking the muse’s help in scourging “the great Disturbers of our Age” (4).


4 The most famous exemplar of this tendency is Sheridan Baker, “Political Allusion in Fielding’s Author’s Farce, Mock Doctor, and Tumble-Down Dick,” *PMLA* 77 (1962): 221-31.
Squire and Madam Ap-Shinken are wonderfully funny, but, however impudent Fielding’s personation of the royal family, it has no real bite. The only political substance is William’s criticism of Robin as a thief and a liar—but when the rivals start to spar, their back-and-forth is quickly silenced by another servant, who matter-of-factly bids the men to make nice. *The Welsh Opera* is unquestionably political, but it is just as certainly non-partisan. This is burlesque for fun, a universe apart from the coarser political satires of the 1730s.5

*Harsh political satire.* Most political satirists during the Walpole regime take its problems much more seriously than Fielding does in *The Welsh Opera*, and their works tend heavily toward complaint. No doubt some of these writers would have liked to have a practical effect, but the notion of toppling Walpole must have appeared to the Opposition a remote possibility at best, which probably accounts for some of the sourness of the anti-ministerial screeds. At crisis points, such as before and after the failure of the Excise in 1733, satirists probably wished to undermine Walpole’s security. Rather than trying to persuade moderates or bring about change, however, his attackers are often simply venting intense frustration and hostility—and like-minded readers surely consumed the negativity with satisfaction. However much these works tell us about the political controversy surrounding the Walpole regime, they are not terribly effective as satire: they are not, on the whole, very interesting or imaginative, and neither are they likely to have had an impact on the political situation. The seriousness with which they take themselves and their charges is not itself a problem: a work like *Absalom and Achitophel* is both reflective of deeply-held belief and also satirically powerful. Walpole’s assailants mostly lack Dryden’s restraint; they are sufficiently upset that they lose their self-control, temper, and perspective, and as a result they produce satire so one-sided as to be plain abuse. These anti-ministerial invectives provide an

5 Very little political satire is as good-humored as Fielding’s play. The anonymous *A Learned Dissertation on Dumpling* (1726) has considerably more topical relevance and potential political bite. The satirist (Henry Carey?) indirectly but fairly transparently exposes ministerial corruption, attacking both parties as crooked and self-interested. However serious the satire’s implications, however, the allegorical gimmick—“dumpling” represents aggregate political vice, and the targets are those ravenous for dumpling—is cheerfully silly.
object lesson in the dreary, trivial nature of certain kinds of negative propaganda—no doubt welcome to Oppositional fellow travelers, but ultimately little more than crude defamation.

Walpole’s detractors stridently enunciate familiar complaints: the minister is a corrupt usurper of royal power whose peculation knows no bounds; his ministry is thoroughly crooked; votes are bought; places are bestowed on incompetent but loyal yes-men; merit is irrelevant; and so on. Responses to particular issues range from petulant to abusively scabrous, but the nature of the attack is fairly consistent.

*The Honest Electors; or, the Courtiers sent back with their Bribes* (pub. 1733; not performed; 1s) is a ballad opera composed after the failure of the Excise scheme and featuring Sir Positive Screenall, “a conceited, foolish, blundering M[iniste]r” (dramatis personae). In the opening scene, two noblemen discuss the shady minister and rehearse a standard charge: “he endeavours, I think, to make Matters worse, and presumes to bully the Nation, and skreen himself by turning all (if he could) worthy Men out of their Places” (7). *Lord Blunder’s Confession; or, Guilt makes a Coward* (another unperformed 1733 ballad opera; 1s 6d) impugns the Great Man in much the same way, though this piece is considerably more rancorous, virulently denigrating Walpole (Lord Blunder), his scheming henchmen, and his unscrupulous hired pens. The author of *The Lion and Fox, or, the Matchievelian; A Satire* (1735; 1s) depicts Walpole as the sycophantic Reynard, whose “lurking Wiles” and “cringing Flattery” allow him to get in the good graces of the Royal Lion. The sly fox’s “pious Maxims”—patriotism, loyalty, sincerity—disguise his base designs (6, 12). Such allegations are repeated in scores of Opposition satires, including Haywood’s *Adventures of Eovaai* (1736; 2s†), *The Craftsman*, and much of the anti-ministerial visual satire, with varying degrees of heat and ferocity. The satiric epithets for Walpole—the Skreenmaster, the Great Man, Bob, Robin—rapidly became synonymous with hypocrisy and political chicanery.

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6 See also *The City Triumphant: or, the Burning of the Excise-Monster. A New Ballad* (1733), whose author is snipingly critical. He describes Walpole (using the familiar epithets) as “void of what some honest People call Brains,” and as adorned with “long Claws” and “Stomach voracious” (4).

7 *The Craftsman* was launched by Bolingbroke and Pulteney on 5 December 1726 (and edited by Nicholas Amhurst); it ran until October 1752 (for a while under the title *The Country Journal, or, The Craftsman*). On anti-ministerial visual satire, see Vincent Carretta, *The Snarling Muse: Verbal and Visual Satire from Pope to Churchill* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), especially chap. 2. Jerry C. Beasley treats various examples
Many of the anti-ministerial complaints have little to recommend them, but some attacks are direct or sharp enough to have considerable shock value.\(^9\) The two most prominent dramatic examples of nasty political application satire are Gay’s *Polly* (pub. 1729; not performed) and *The Fall of Mortimer* (staged at the Little Haymarket in the spring of 1731), both of which riled the authorities.\(^10\) Walpole was none too pleased by being represented as a pirate who gets hanged: *Polly* was firmly suppressed and not staged in Gay’s lifetime.\(^11\) *The Fall of Mortimer* begins with a group of rational, decent, loyal men bemoaning the power of a tyrant (presented as a liar and would-be rapist) who misleads the benevolent and much-adored King Edward.\(^12\) The faithful Englishmen decide to rally the masses and agitate against Mortimer; just before they make their overtures to the king, he has a vision of his father’s ghost warning him to beware Mortimer, leaving him receptive to the patriots’ charges. When the patriots and the mob seize Mortimer, King Edward orders his richly-deserved execution: “hurry him down the Dungeon, There of anti-ministerial prose satire in “Portraits of a Monster: Robert Walpole and Early English Prose Fiction,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 14 (1981): 406-31.

\(^9\) See also James Miller’s *Are these Things So?* and *The Great Man’s Answer to Are these Things So?* (1740; both 1s), as well as the respondents to Miller, many of whom share in his disapproval of the Walpole ministry (e.g., *Yes, they are: being an Answer to Are these Things so?*). Other satires that rehearse the standard anti-Walpole charges include *The Better Sequel Better’d. in a Dialogue Betwixt the Oak and the Dunghill* (1729; 6d), Thomas Odell’s *The Patron: or, the Statesman’s Opera* (1729), and Pope’s *The Impertinent, or a Visit to the Court. A Satyr* (pub. anonymously in 1733; printed in Pope’s 1735 *Works* as *The Fourth Satire of Dr. John Donne*).

\(^10\) William Havard’s *King Charles the First* (1737) is another dramatic satire against Walpole, this time suggesting that corrupt ministers can bring about the downfall of kings. As Robert D. Hume points out, the published version of the piece “is at least as subversive as *The Fall of Mortimer,*” but for performance “a good deal of detail reinforcing the parallels to George II and Walpole was cut.” See *Henry Fielding and the London Theatre, 1728-1737* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 239.

\(^11\) Gay thought the scandal of his satire would increase marketability: the subscription price was a guinea, and the play with music was offered to other buyers for 6s. Gay was outraged when (within a week of its initial publication) pirates made it available for as little as 1s. He took legal action against this unauthorized competition, but was forced to drop the quarto price to 2s 6d. See James R. Sutherland, “‘Polly’ among the Pirates,” *The Modern Language Review*, 37 (1942): 291-303, and Calhoun Winton, *John Gay and the London Theatre* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1993), especially pp. 133-35.

\(^12\) The “majesty misled” theme also appears in Charles Forman’s *Protesilaus: or, the Character of an Evil Minister* (1730; 1s). Forman defames the Great Man at length and not at all subtly, insinuating that the minister is guilty of treason, and suggesting that George II would do well to realize the danger of letting his minister carry on unchecked. The implication of Forman’s non-particularized advice is brutally clear: “It may some time or other happen, as it has already happened, that Britain may see a Prince on her Throne, who may think himself very well served, when the Nation finds it self very ill used” (x).
let him groan till Day, and then he dies” (62). In the epilogue, the author reflects on ministerial corruption, rejoicing that “No MORTIMER wants now to rule alone”—a bitterly ironic indictment of the Great Man. The contemporary application was glaringly obvious, and Sir Robert did not approve. The authorities attempted to arrest the Little Haymarket performers, who took to their heels; the theater was raided and de facto silenced; the raids were publicized as warnings to other playwrights, pointed reminders of the government’s sensitivity to certain kinds of criticism. “To express the principles and ideology of the opposition was within the unwritten rules,” but, as The Fall of Mortimer demonstrated, “to point a finger too directly at Walpole” was likely to lead to trouble.13

Swift’s truculent invectives against Walpole are among the most interesting of the non-dramatic satires—and almost got the Dean in hot water.14 On Mr. P[ultene]y being put out of the Council (1731), a short verse fable, concludes with an admonition to “honest R[obi]n”: “Thy Turns and Doublings cannot save thee long” (ll. 39, 44).15 Equally jaunty but much more withering is The Character of Sir Robert Walpole (1731; not published in Swift’s lifetime), an undisguised lampoon on the “bully & briber,” “the Cur dog of Brittan & spaniel of Spain” (ll. 12, 14). More blistering yet is To Mr. Gay on his being Steward to the Duke of Queensberry (1731), whose description of the Great Man is acid.

I place a ST[ATESM]AN full before my Sight.
A bloated M[iniste]r in all his Geer,
With shameless Visage, and perfidious Leer,
Two Rows of Teeth arm each devouring Jaw;
And, Ostrich-like, his all-digesting Maw

Of loud un-meaning Sounds, a rapid Flood
Rolls from his Mouth in plenteous Streams of Mud;
With these, the Court and Senate-house he plies,
Made up of Noise, and Impudence, and Lies. (ll. 32-36, 39-42)

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13 Hume, Henry Fielding, 84. Hume usefully distinguishes this sort of political satire from other plays that have clear political statements but do not hit at Walpole so directly—for example, John Kelly’s Timon in Love (1733), William Duncombe’s Junius Brutus (1734), and George Lillo’s The Christian Hero (1735).
14 Rawson reports that Walpole was sufficiently angered by On Poetry: A Rapsody and An Epistle to a Lady (both 1733) to consider ordering Swift’s arrest (Order from Confusion Sprung, 175-76). The printers and publishers of these two poems were taken into custody; see The Poems of Jonathan Swift, ed. Williams, 2:629, 640.
15 All quotations of Swift’s poetry are from Williams’s edition.
The directness and indecorousness with which Swift savages Walpole makes his invectives considerably more toxic than most anti-ministerial calumny of the thirties.

Few of Swift’s contemporaries match his vituperative energy, but Paul Whitehead comes close in *Manners: A Satire* (1739; 6d). Whitehead’s attack on “the Farce of State” was sufficiently scandalous to rouse the government to order the arrest of author and publisher.\(^{16}\) The thrust of Whitehead’s satire is familiar enough—manners make the man, and the higher-ups are acutely short on worthy conduct—but the brazen ferocity of his delivery gives to the satire especial sting. “Whence have St. Stephen’s Walls so hallow’d been?” he asks irreverently, rancorously observing that neither church nor state has preserved a trace of the requisite decency.

> MANNERS alone claim Homage as their Due.
> Without, the Court and Church are both prophane,
> Whatever Prelate preach, or Monarch reign;
> *Religion*’s Rostrum, *Virtue*’s Scaffold grows,
> And Crowns and Mitres are mere Raree-shows. (6)

Whitehead then turns his attention to the Great Man himself, explaining that while monarchs can be mocked without fear of reprisal, ministers must be spared the chastising pen.

> I name not W[alpol]e; You the Reason guess;
> Mark yon fell Harpy hov’ring o’er the Press.
> Secure the Muse may sport with Names of Kings,
> But Ministers, my Friend, are dang’rous Things. (13)\(^{17}\)

The attack is devastatingly particularized, but it is also broadly cynical. Whitehead is not only lamenting the rise and reign of Walpole but denouncing an ever-worsening society.

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\(^{16}\) The quotation is at p. 3. In the *ODNB* entry on Whitehead, James Sambrook gives the following explanation: “The House of Lords decreed that *Manners* was scandalous and ordered the author and publisher (Robert Dodsley) into custody. Whitehead decamped and Dodsley was not further prosecuted.” Johnson suggested that “the whole process was probably intended rather to intimidate Pope than to punish Whitehead” (*The Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets*, ed. Lonsdale, 4:47).

\(^{17}\) A few satirists in this period object to the government’s censorship of the press (more systematic/formal than what Whitehead calls “yon fell Harpy hov’ring o’er the Press”) and/or mock the paranoia that brings about such measures. In *A Compleat Vindication of the Licensers of the Stage* (pub. anonymously in 1739; 1s†), Samuel Johnson has his speaker argue (ironically) that, in David F. Venturo’s phrasing, “only suppression of the freedom of the press can bring ‘peace’ to Britain in these tempestuous times.” See *Johnson the Poet: The Poetic Career of Samuel Johnson* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999), 65. Gay had more playfully ridiculed governmental paranoia in such matters in *The Rehearsal at Goatham* (c.1730; not published until 1754), a one-act comedy in which an author’s puppet-show is mined by the officials for non-existent political innuendos. The writer pleads his innocence, but the authorities doggedly carry out their search, looking both foolish and guilty.
Gloomy political satire. Other satirists perceive political collapse, sharing what I take to be Whitehead’s profound disillusionment but often more glum than angry. Pope’s last Dunciad is an overtly apocalyptic comment on the cultural/political state of England. Even a decade earlier, by the time of The First Satire of the Second Book of Horace Imitated (Fortescue; 1733), says Howard D. Weinbrot, Pope is responding to a world apparently “rotten at its political core.” The perversity he perceives is not a matter of one dirty minister but of a degenerating society; the poem’s “dark tones” are undeniable, though it is not utterly pessimistic.  

Five years later, hope no longer springs eternal in the papal breast. In the Epilogue to the Satires (1738), corruption is shown to be securely entrenched and “the poet can merely bear witness to an evil that appears unstoppable.” Like An Excursory View of the Present State of Men and Things. A Satire and The State of Rome, under Nero and Domitian: A Satire (both 1739), Pope’s satires are broadly political. They deal not with specific issues (à la Swift) but with widespread moral turpitude, a state of affairs allowed and even encouraged by governmental failings and ministerial jobbery.

Pope, like the authors of An Excursory View and The State of Rome, is perhaps voicing genuine despair, though that is not necessarily the case. We need to allow for the possibility that, just as indignation à la Oldham could be a performance, so might “gloom” be a pose struck to render the satire more potent. In Johnson’s telling, Pope “frequently professes contempt of the world, and represents himself as looking on mankind, sometimes with gay indifference . . . and sometimes with gloomy indignation.” These “dispositions,” Johnson concludes matter-of-factly, were “apparently counterfeit.” In any case, Pope seems concerned not only or even primarily with political rot, but also

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18 Weinbrot, Alexander Pope and the Traditions of Formal Verse Satire (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 238. In The Impertinent, an anonymously published satire of the same year, Pope has less to say about particulars than about the greater sins of which they are emblematic. Says Carretta: “he sees and understands the universal . . . implications of the corruption underlying the court of George II” (The Snarling Muse, 113).
19 David B. Morris, Alexander Pope: The Genius of Sense (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 253. Epilogue to the Satires actually comprises two “dialogues,” printed separately in 1738; they were revised and published together under the title Epilogue to the Satires in 1740.
with the role of the artist within society and with the province of the satirist in attempting to redress the wrongs he sees around him.  

_The culture wars_

The political satires I have been discussing range from primarily comic to harsh (whether plaintive or punitive) to more broadly cynical or despairing (whether genuinely or rhetorically). The satires to which I now turn, predominantly cultural in subject matter, vary in similar ways. Before I go any further, I should say that by “cultural” I mean something specifically concerning arts and letters, not something related more broadly to the behavioral patterns or manners found in a particular society—this includes _The Dunciad_, not _The Modern Husband_. Most of the cultural satires in this period are responses to the proliferation of low culture, to the purveyors of bad art, or to the debauched patronage system in which sycophantic hacks are the darlings of the ministry and semi-competent artists have to debase themselves if they are to win favor. Some of these satires are undeniably political—Pope’s dunces are repeatedly described as Walpole’s venal hirelings—and these more comprehensive satires tend to be among the angrier and more despairing of the responses to perceived cultural decay. As in the survey of political satire, I begin with exemplars of lower-heat satire and end with those pieces that express more anger or general despondency.

_Weightless cultural satire and entertainment_. Burlesques and other forms of low culture fared well in the late 1720s and early 1730s. Samuel Johnson of Cheshire’s _Hurlothrumbo_ (1729), one of many successful burlesques and unquestionably the zaniest, ran up thirty-three performances at the Little Haymarket. The epigraph offers playfully confounding counsel: “Ye Sons of Fire, read my _HURLOTHRUMBO,/_ Turn it betwixt your Finger and your Thumbo,/_ And being quite outdone, be quite struck dumbo.” The piece is straight nonsense, full of dizzying action-snippets, prophecies, intrigues, high-flown speeches, and demented characters, one of whom states flatly, mid-play, “I rent my Brain”  

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Fielding’s *Tom Thumb* (added to *The Author’s Farce* as an afterpiece in April 1730; 6d) is another lively burlesque of heroic tragedy, without reference to particular exemplars, past or present. The opening scene has Doodle and Noodle anticipating the arrival of the victorious Tom Thumb:

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Sure, such a Day as this was never seen!
The Sun himself, on this auspicious Day,
Shines like a Beau in a new Birth-Day Suit:
All Nature, O my Noodle! grins for Joy. (1:387)
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In the play’s memorable ending, Tom is swallowed by “A Cow, of larger than the usual Size,” after which his ghost is slain by Grizzle, Grizzle by Huncamunca, Huncamunca by Doodle, and so on, until the King slays Mustacha and himself and the curtain falls on a pile of bodies (1:403-04). *Tom Thumb* is much less disorienting than *Hurlothrumbo*, but, the critical quest of yesteryear to detect systematic political satire notwithstanding, it is just as silly. Henry Carey’s *The Tragedy of Chrononhotonthologos* (1734; 6d), an imitation of *Tom Thumb*, is filled with impenetrable gibberish. It begins, “*Aldiborontiphoscophornio!* Where left you *Chrononhotonthologos*?”, and is a patently good-tempered debunking of tragic and operatic bombast.

More substantial is Fielding’s *The Author’s Farce* (1730; rev. 1734), a boisterous deflation of popular entertainment forms (John Henley’s Oratory, John Rich’s pantomimes, Eliza Haywood’s novels) but also a satire with considerably more bite than *Tom Thumb*. “When Fielding sat down to write *The Author’s Farce,*” Hume observes, “he had something to say.” He was unhappy about the rejection of his plays at Drury Lane and aggravated by Cibber; his personal irritation combined with a more general

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22 Says Lockwood: “As in *The Author’s Farce*, Fielding produces a kind of parody entertainment or caricature which does not so much keep an identifiable original before us as create its own enthusiastic idiom of nonsense. The characters of *Tom Thumb* rant passionately in a debased parody language, but in fact do not very often parody anything in particular. It would be different with *The Tragedy of Tragedies*, of course, which thrives on parody not only particularized but scrupulously identified too. But in *Tom Thumb*, though just as much a mock tragedy, there are surprisingly few such hits or lines mockingly borrowed from other playtexts.” See *Plays, Volume One, 1728-1731*, ed. Lockwood (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 364.

23 Fielding satirizes popular entertainments in his poem *The Masquerade* (1728) as well, but again his critique is delivered with bounce. As Hunter explains, Fielding “affects a world-weary look at contemporary life, most particularly the fashionable world of fops, belles, and masquerade balls. It is vibrant with that exuberant tone of youthful cynicism, limitless hope veneered by fashionable despair, and it jotsgrots mockingly, equating broken harmony with blemished rituals, interrupted dances, and untunings of the shy” (*Occasional Form*, 11).

disapproval of the cultural tastes of the town to produce an inspired piece of parody. Fielding’s Witmore voices his creator’s exasperation when he enjoins the impecunious playwright Luckless to abandon wit and learning in his compositions: “If you must write, write Nonsense, write Opera’s, write Entertainments, write Hurlo-thrumbo’s—Set up an Oratory and preach Nonsense; and you may meet with Encouragement enough” (1:234-35). Fielding does not condemn but instead mockingly reproduces cultural nonsense. This is a chirpy caricature, tonally a long way from The Dunciad or even the toothless Peri Bathous. Closer to Fielding in tone are Gabriel Odingsell’s Bays’s Opera and James Ralph’s The Fashionable Lady; or Harlequin’s Opera (both 1730). Neither play is as effective as The Author’s Farce, but all three are amusing satiric parodies of low culture, as is Henry Carey’s The Dragon of Wantley (1737). Carey’s play is an especially exuberant parody of Italian opera. In a fabulous anti-climax, the valiant knight slays the dragon “by a kick on the Backside,” and the dying dragon cries out, “Oh! oh! oh! / The Devil take your Toe” (17).\(^{25}\) These satirists travesty undesirable cultural forms with genuine disapprobation but also with comical gusto.

_Harsh cultural satire._ A great deal of the cultural satire in this period is more explicitly—and less good-humoredly—derogatory. Fielding’s disdain for “low” culture did not affect his desire to stage plays; his decision to parody rather than to damn the tastes of the town is in part a matter of exigency.\(^{26}\) Other disapproving traditionalists are readier to rail, often in high moral terms. In A Satyr on the Times: And some of the Modern Plays (1730), the Anglican minister John Loyd [sic] cheerlessly bemoans the “pleasing Poison” of nonsensical entertainments, condemning various contemporary plays in turn. He finds fault with The Beggar’s Opera (“Whose Characters throughout are all so loose”), Timoleon (“the best Character in all his Play’s a Whore”), The Humours of Oxford (“insolently dull!”), and Hurlothurumbo (“Which without either Head or Tail appears!”)—all of which point to a culture in decline.

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\(^{25}\) Other lightweight burlesques of a similar type are The Opera of Operas; or, Tom Thumb the Great (written by Haywood in collaboration with others; 1733) and Carey’s Margery; or, a Worse Plague than the Dragon (1738), the sequel to The Dragon of Wantley. See also The Pigeon-Pye, or, a King’s Coronation, Proper Materials For forming an Oratorio, Opera, or Play, According to the Modern Taste: to Be Represented in Opposition to the Dragon of Wantley (1738; 1s).

\(^{26}\) See Lockwood, Plays, Volume One, 187-88.
Loyd, like the author of *A Satirical Poem: or, the Beggar’s-Opera Dissected* (1729; 6d), thumps a tub grumpily, lecturing both the producers and the consumers of nonsense.\(^{27}\)

The best-known exemplar from the culture wars of this period is, of course, Pope’s *Dunciad*.\(^{28}\) While the 1728 version (1s†) is considerably lighter than the 1743 *Dunciad, in Four Books*, the satire in both is primarily punitive—not for nothing does Leopold Damrosch describe *The Dunciad*’s “sprawling fertility of defamation.”\(^{29}\) Pope haughtily ridicules a host of hitherto unknown scribblers, though not until the *Variorum* edition of the next year (2s†) did he fill in the blanks. After the appearance of the 1728 *Dunciad*, Swift wrote to Pope urging him to make his attack more explicit:

> I have long observ’d that twenty miles from London no body understands hints, initial letters, or town-facts and passages; and in a few years not even those who live in London. . . . I am sure it will be a great disadvantage to the poem, that the persons and facts will not be understood, till an explanation comes out, and a very full one. . . . Again I insist, you must have your Asterisks fill’d up with some real names of real Dunces.\(^{30}\)

Never much for pulling punches, Swift beseeches Pope to personalize his satire—and Pope was clearly willing to satisfy his friend by adding some salt to his lampoon.

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\(^{27}\) Robert Baker’s *A Rehearsal of a New Ballad-Opera burlesqu’d, call’d The Mad-House. After the Manner of Pasquin* (1737; 1s) ridicules Theophilus Cibber, popular entertainments, and Italian opera. The author of *A Trip to Vaux-Hall: Or, A General Satyr on the Times* (1737; 1s) likewise satirizes the vogue for Farinelli, as well as the Vauxhall pleasure-seekers.

\(^{28}\) Pope satirizes bad critics as well as bad poets, of course, especially in the *Dunciad Variorum* (1729), where he “incorporated all the paraphernalia required to make the book a parody of a typical eighteenth-century learned edition of a classical literary text” (Mack, *Alexander Pope*, 476). Satire on pedantry is usually taken as a prominent enterprise in this period, but in fact only a small number of works have that as their object. Obviously *Peri Bathous* and *The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus* include satire of this sort, as does the 1729 *Dunciad*. Arbuthnot’s very minor *A Brief Account of Mr. John Ginglicutt’s Treatise* (1731) and *Virgilius Restauratus* (pub. 1732) are scrappy satires on learning, the first lightweight and amused, the other unfocused and less interesting. See also David Mallet’s *Of Verbal Criticism: An Epistle to Mr. Pope* (1733), which defends Pope and criticizes Bentley, Theobald, and other so-called pedants.

\(^{29}\) Damrosch, *The Imaginative World of Alexander Pope*, 120.

The Dunciad is personally defensive, but it is also harshly offensive, a serious and troubled protest against personal foes, the Grub Street drudges, and the peddlers of low culture. Pope writes from a position of superiority but not from one of much comfort. The indignant dunces struck back, personally nettled but also taking furious exception to Pope’s self-appointed role as cultural guardian. In Durgen. Or, a Plain Satyr upon a Pompous Satyrist (1729; 1s), Ned Ward thrashes “the pigmy Bard” (4) and then denies the right of any man to play custodian of the arts. He sharply deprecates the notion that a poet’s or a critic’s composition needs to be

\[
\text{stamp’d with some fam’d Poet’s seal,}
\]
\[
\text{Who proudly thinks, in his imperious Breast,}
\]
\[
\text{Is lodg’d the pow’r of damming all the rest,}
\]
\[
\text{As if ‘twas petty Treason ’gainst the Nine,}
\]
\[
\text{For any daring modern Bard to coin,}
\]
\[
\text{Without his approbation, one good Line. (14)}
\]

This is satiric vengeance, to be sure, but Ward definitely has strong feelings about Pope’s presumption that he should or can regulate culture. In any case, The Dunciad made “dullness” a buzzword for cultural degeneration—but the majority of Pope’s dunces were ministerial supporters, and dullness in the 1730s and early 1740s is often identified as both a cultural and a political problem.

Many satires in this period link political misrule to cultural degradation. The Opposition’s charges are familiar enough: the government shows an obnoxious partiality toward those authors who will toe the party line; unskilled scribblers prepared to play toadies can find patronage; talent is immaterial;

\[31\] Says Mack, a touch too generously: “Whatever else the poem might be, it was a determined effort to settle scores with a mob of scribblers . . . who had made bold to sneer at him in print for nearly twenty years” (Alexander Pope, 475). Weinbrot admits that Pope is after a fashion settling scores, but also argues that his “personal motive is subsumed within the larger motive of public service—those proud of their vice should be exposed” (Menippean Satire Reconsidered, 243). Other satires on low culture that are closer, in tone and intensity, to Pope than to Fielding are The Players: A Satire (1733; 1s) and British Frenzy: or, the Mock-Apollo. A Satyr (1745).

\[32\] See also Ward’s Apollo’s Maggot in his Caps: or, the Whimsical Creation of a Little Satyrical Poet (1729; 1s).

\[33\] Censorious responses to Pope, and to the Dunciad in particular, are legion. J. V. Guerinot includes some 160 items in his Pamphlet Attacks on Alexander Pope 1711-1744: A Descriptive Bibliography (New York: New York University Press, 1969). Some examples include James Ralph’s Sawney. An Heroic Poem Occasion’d by the Dunciad (1728), the anonymous The Female Dunciad (1728), and Leonard Welsted’s One Epistle to Mr. A. Pope (1730). The last is in part a response to Young’s (anti-Dunce, pro-Pope) Two Epistles to Mr. Pope, Concerning the Authors of the Age (1730). Richard Savage disparages the dunces in similar fashion in An Author to be Lett (1729).
and true artists have either to prostitute themselves or to starve. In the *Epistle to Arbuthnot* (1735; 1s), Pope sneers at kowtowing hacks and their benefactors: “May ev’ry Bavius have his Bufo still!” (l. 250). The minister’s role in the perceived cultural collapse is notorious. As Brean S. Hammond explains, “Walpole was seen to be derelicting on his and his government’s duty to patronize writers of merit. He was putting an exponentially increasing network of opportunity at the disposal of writers whose only qualification was that they would write on his side of any question.” Swift notoriously dubbed the Great Man “B[ob], the Poet’s Foe” in *To Mr. Gay* (l. 4), and in *A Libel on D[r] D[elany], and a Certain Great Lord* (1730), he excoriates the ministry for its shabby treatment of genuine wits like Congreve, Gay, and Addison. The *Libel* is a provocatively sharp satire on Walpole and the entire Walpolean system, concluding with a scorcher: “For, no imaginable things / Can differ more than GOD and [Kings] / And, Statesmen by ten thousand odds / Are ANGELS, just as [Kings] are GODS.”

Walpole was inextricably connected, in the Opposition’s imagination, to the sort of scribblers immortalized in *The Dunciad*. In *The State Dunces. Inscribed to Mr. Pope* (1733; 1s), Whitehead inveighs against the tyrant Appius (Walpole) and his devoted dunces. His main concern is political, but he swipes at Cibber, Welsted, Dennis, and the lot of mercenary drudges who “Unlade their Dullness, and for Appius bawl” (16). Swift’s *Directions for a Birth-day Song* (1729) is a more clever piece of politicized anti-duncery, a poem of ironic counsel to the hacks on how to cajole the royal family.

Thus your Encomiums, to be strong,
Must be apply’d directly wrong:

34 In *The Tears of the Muses; in a Conference, between Prince Germanicus, and a Male-content Party* (1737), Aaron Hill laments cultural decline in general, and the government’s failure to support its authors in particular. A number of satires complain about flattery and writing for patronage, including *Verres and his Scribblers; A Satire in three Cantos* (1732), *Persius Scaramouch: or, a Critical and Moral Satire on the Orators, Scribblers, and Vices of the present Times* (1734), and Thomas Gilbert, *A Panegyric on a Court* (1739). A more solemn lamentation on this cultural decay is the anonymous *Seventeen Hundred and Thirty-nine. or, the Modern P[oe]ts. A Satire* (1739).

35 Hammond, *Professional Imaginative Writing in England*, 242. The connection between literature and politics in this period has been well studied by Goldgar in *Walpole and the Wits*.

36 Pro-ministerial authors sometimes reversed the allegation, arguing that the Oppositional writers are untalented rabble-rousers pleased to rehearse popular charges. The satirist of *Discontent; or an Essay on Faction: a Satire. Address'd to the Writers of the Craftsman, and other Party Papers* (1736; 1s) sneers that “each Scribling Hack” becomes “a Patriot Muse” (12).
A Tyrant for his Mercy praise,  
And crown a Royal Dunce with Bays:  
A squinting Monkey load with charms;  
And paint a Coward fierce in arms. (ll. 117-22)\(^{38}\)

The fawning scribblers and their undeserving subjects earn Swift’s amused contempt. Like scores of his contemporaries, he exposes corruption, pretension, and unmerited rank, but the irony and restraint of this poem gives it verve hard to find in the late twenties and thirties.

\textit{Gloomy cultural satire.} The perception of both political and cultural collapse causes some satirists to write not particularized invectives but solemn denunciation on a much bigger scale. The most celebrated of these works is Pope’s \textit{Dunciad, in Four Books} (1743), a considerably broader satire than the primarily literary 1728 \textit{Dunciad}. The central Dunce is of course not Theobald but Cibber; Pope’s victims are not simply scribbling hacks but ministerial penmen; the problem is not bad art but a “generally collapsing world”; and the satirist is not self-righteously annoyed but disgusted, despairing, and apprehensive about “the increasing violence of Dulness’s ever-growing forces.”\(^{39}\) The apocalyptic ending (“Universal Darkness buries All”) is oft-cited. In the world of Pope’s fourth book, something has been irretrievably lost. A small number of satirists had bewailed cultural decay on this scale in the previous decade. The author of \textit{The Connoisseur. A Satire On the modern Men of Taste} (1735; 1s) grouses that the crowd sleeps through Shakespeare and applauds “the Mimic Harlequin.” Pope-like, he declaims that “despotic Folly governs All” (12, 6). That work, like \textit{The Modern Englishman. A Satire} (1738; 1s),

\footnote{\textit{Swift has contempt aplenty for writers motivated by political ambition and those rewarded for loyalty rather than merit. He mocks Edward Young—whose \textit{Love of Fame} satires had contained grand blandishment of Walpole—in \textit{On Reading Dr. Young’s Satires, called the Universal Passion} (1726), for instance, and he lampoons the Thresher poet (regarded by both Swift and Pope as a bungling incompetent) in \textit{On Stephen Duck, the Thresher and favourite Poet, a Quibbling Epigram} (1730). His most celebrated satire connecting bad literature and bad politics is \textit{On Poetry: A Rapsody} (1733), a sour and wonderfully nasty piece of politicized lampoonery. Swift derides Dennis, Cibber, Fielding, and others, and he condemns party pens more generally.}}

\footnote{\textit{Weinbrot, Menippean Satire Reconsidered}, 253, 248. Weinbrot justly highlights the difficulty of reading this “great but often alienating work”—Pope’s tones are exceptionally harsh (270).}
belongs more to the realm of generalized satires on man than to strictly cultural complaint, though both connect failures of taste and the decline of cultural standards with degeneracy writ large.\(^{40}\)

Three points need to be made. (1) A very small number of cultural satires are apocalyptic in the manner of Pope’s 1743 *Dunciad*. Much of this satire is either jolly (see *Hurlothrumbo*), however genuine the author’s disapprobation may be, or pointed and particularized (like *The Author’s Farce*). Pope’s last *Dunciad* is brilliant, and it is not an isolated example of gloomy cultural commentary, but it hardly typifies the attitude toward the state of letters in this period. (2) Tonal differences matter. Fielding and Pope both disdain “low” culture, but Fielding stages lively, popular, and highly effective nonsense pieces by way of parody, whereas Pope shrilly denounces purveyors of bad art root-and-branch. Weinbrot has rightly rejected the idea that, in *The Tragedy of Tragedies* in particular, Fielding is “battling the legions of Night” hand-in-hand with Pope. He points out that “such dark language makes heavy weather” out of a rather cheerful play, and also that “Fielding’s contemporaries sometimes regarded his burlesques as exemplums of the dangerous dulness that Pope satirized.”\(^{41}\) The notion that *The Tragedy of Tragedies*, *Peri Bathous*, and the last *Dunciad* somehow represent a “mode” of Scriblerian cultural criticism can be compelling only to the hopelessly tone-deaf. If we add *Directions for a Birth-day Song*, the 1728 *Dunciad*, *Tom Thumb*, and the rest, the picture becomes even messier. (3) The third observation is actually a question. How confident can we be that the “gloom” of some of the political and/or cultural satires of this period is genuine? Obviously tone is not a fail-safe indicator of authorial feelings; what one reader takes as indignation another could interpret as hyperbolic performance. In some cases, authorial anxiety seems hard to deny, but we do need to understand that cynicism and despair can also be rhetorical devices. Objecting to Walpole’s failure to support England’s ablest pens is obviously a common practice in these years, but it is unlikely to win the sympathy of all and sundry. If one wants to demonize the

\(^{40}\) The author of *The Connoisseur* sulkily complains that “A smutty Jest is what delights ’em most,” blaming “vitiated Taste” for much of society’s trouble (12, 15). The satirist of *The Modern Englishman* likewise denounces the “reigning Foible of the Times”—that is, “This Thing call’d TASTE, this new fam’d ALAMODE!” (6)

Great Man in popular imagination, or to demonstrate his cultural negligence, then a picture of omnipresent stink makes for a stronger piece of persuasion than a cantankerous plaint by an aggrieved poet.

Social satire

Like political and cultural satires, social satires range in tone and intensity. Lightweight social satire such as we find in Robert Dodsley’s *The Toy-Shop* tends to be rather mild in its critique, fairly generalized in its subject, and primarily—if not exclusively—entertaining. Harsh social satirists have contempt rather than pity or amused indulgence for their targets. They denounce society and/or its various inhabitants with anger, objecting to an unacceptable state of affairs, as in Hogarth’s *A Harlot’s Progress*. Despairing social satire (Swift’s scatological poems?) is not entirely remote from harsh condemnation, but its practitioners tend to be resigned to that which their angry counterparts (however vainly) refuse to endure.

*Lightweight social satire.* This sort of social satire becomes an increasingly conspicuous phenomenon after the reign of Charles II, in part because of the need for generalized satires in the 1690s and early 1700s. While satire on abstract concepts all but disappears a decade into the eighteenth century, those on particular groups or parts of society do not. These works are usually at least somewhat amusing, and they are usually without much specific application or topical relevance. An anonymous ballad opera satirizing high life, *The Humours of the Court: or, Modern Gallantry* (1732; 1s 6d) is filled with court intrigues, superficial pleasures, the desire for novelty, and so on. The spirit of the satire is well-captured in an observation made by the character Modish: “Virtue, Modesty, and Honour, I must own, are pretty Things to talk on, and sound very well in one’s Mouth; but for the Practice of them, ’tis almost as

42 Some examples of this sort of lightweight social satire are *Vivitur Ingenio: being a Collection Of Elegant, Moral, Satirical, and Comical Thoughts, on Various Subjects* (1726), full of satirical/comical maxims; *A Satyr on the Lawyers Concerning two Clowns and an Oyster* (1727), a nonsensical broadside; Thomas Uvedale’s *A Cure for Love: A Satyr in Imitation of Ovid* (2nd edn., 1732; 1s), a bouncy, non-bitter satire on women; and *A Trip Through the Town* (1735; 1s), a Ward-like piece of amused description. See also Robert Dodsley’s *Sir John Cockle at Court* (1738), David Garrick’s *Lethe* (1740), and the anonymous *Bickerstaff’s Unburied Dead* (1743)—in all three, says Kinservik, “A wise man stands judge over a series of generalized London fools” (*Disciplining Satire*, 130).
much out of Fashion as Sincerity amongst Courtiers, and altogether as unprofitable” (17). Though not without satiric point, this is ultimately an entertainment piece. So is the first of Young’s Universal Passion satires (1725). Satires two through seven are heavier-handed, not-very-effectively mingling Horatian calm with Juvenalian anger, but Satire I’s generalized critique of the human desire for fame is mild and amused. The same could be said of Dodsley’s The Toy-Shop. A Dramatick Satire (1735; 1s), in which the toyshop owner good-naturedly moralizes over the trifles in his store. When one of his customers inquires about the value of an impossibly tiny box, he merrily expounds on its utility: “would you think it, in this same little Box, a Courtier may deposite his Sincerity, a Lawyer may screw up his Honesty, and a Poet may—hoard his Money” (15). The owner delivers his jibes with warm amusement, and The Toy-Shop is genially witty rather than abrasive in its satiric commentary.43

Hogarth’s satiric prints are often serious in their implications, but some of his pieces are relatively lightweight. A Midnight Modern Conversation (1733) presents a group of lawyers, doctors, merchants, and clergymen around a table. Rather than playing cards and sipping tea, they are drunk and smoking, varyingly sleeping, howling, jabbering, and bickering. Hogarth is undoubtedly making a point about the pretensions of polite society, but he also seems to be thoroughly enjoying himself, leavening his satire with comic representation.44 Not for nothing does David Bindman refer to A Midnight Modern Conversation as “perhaps the most deliberately good-humored seeming of his satirical prints.”45 In Taste in High Life; or Taste a la mode (1742), Hogarth ridicules taste in general and female fashion in particular, but the effect is considerably lighter than something like his Marriage A-la-mode (1743-45; 3s†).
advertised in 1745 for a guinea and a half). The narrative component of that series gives it real weight. The prints show the financial/moral dissolution and eventual deaths of a couple forced into matrimony by their self-interested fathers. Taste in High Life and Marriage A-la-mode are thematically similar but tonally nothing alike.

Harsh social satire. Lightweight social satire is more common in this period than harder-hitting social satire, but the latter is not without practitioners. In 1730, Fielding wrote to his cousin Lady Mary Wortley Montagu about a play draft, which he describes as “written on a Model I never yet attempted” and distinguishes from his “lighter Productions.” The play was The Modern Husband (staged at Drury Lane in 1732), one of Fielding’s few attempts at hard-hitting social satire. Mr. and Mrs. Modern’s union is far from holy; he is a “contented Cuckold” (his phrase) who allows his wife to sell herself to Lord Richly, a sleazy and thoroughly despicable womanizer; she sells her favors and her husband blackmails her lovers. “The play exudes adultery,” Hunter observes, “and there is no attempt to pretend that it is all jolly fun and games.” One character states matter-of-factly: “It is a Stock-jobbing Age, ev’ry thing has its Price; Marriage is Traffick throughout; as most of us bargain to be Husbands, so much of us bargain to be Cuckolds; and he wou’d be as much laught at, who preferr’d his Love to his Interest, at this End of Town, as he who preferr’d his Honesty to his Interest at the other” (2:237). Fielding sharply satirizes the Moderns and Lord Richly, who are genuinely contemptible characters. They are not objects of sympathy but unfeeling brutes. The Modern Husband is an uncompromisingly harsh satire that, Hume says, “offers

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46 “Taste” is a favorite theme for social (or socio-cultural) satirists in this period. Pope satirizes a variety of bad tastes in the Moral Essays (discussed below); see also James Bramston’s The Man of Taste (1733; 1s), a chirpier satire on current fashion than was Pope’s Epistle To Burlington, originally published in 1731, and—according to the ODNB—the occasion for Bramston’s poem.


48 Plays, Volume Two, 1732-1734, ed. Lockwood (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 223. One of Fielding’s satiric targets, as Hume points out, is the “crim. con.” law: because wives were the property of husbands, they could not “consent” to extra-marital sex; according to this law, therefore, a husband could collect damages for his wife’s adultery from her sexual partner (Henry Fielding, 121-22).

49 Hunter, Occasional Form, 56.
one of the darkest visions of society since Otway’s *Friendship in Fashion.* Fielding tried straight
denunciation again in *The Universal Gallant* (1735), a long and oppressively serious social satire. Unlike
*The Modern Husband,* it failed immediately. Fielding is a master of indirection, vivacity, and comic
irony. That way lies his satiric genius. When he tries to be a soapbox satirist, decrying social ills without
anything to mitigate his disgust, he quickly becomes strident and dull. These two plays, like *Amelia,* no
doubt convey the genuine social convictions of their author, but they are not particularly effective either
as satire or as entertainment.

Harsh satiric deprecation is not limited to the stage. Hogarth’s *A Harlot’s Progress* (1732) and
*A Rake’s Progress* (1735) both include pointed indictments of society and its inhabitants. The Harlot
moves among an ever-changing “cast of male aristocrats, merchants, magistrates, jailers, quacks,
clergymen and undertakers,” very different men but uniformly corrupt and self-interested. Hogarth is
objecting to a state of affairs he finds deplorable: the Harlot and the Rake are both guilty in their plights,
but they are also symptoms and victims of a dissipated society. An illustrative verse exemplar of harsh
social satire is Thomas Newcomb’s *Blasphemy As Old as the Creation: or, The Newgate Divine. A Satyr*
(1730), signed “By a Gentleman and a Christian” and full of fire and brimstone. Newcomb’s central
target is irreligion—namely that sponsored by the free-thinking Matthew Tindal, author of *Christianity as
Old as the Creation,* and by Mandeville, who argues “That Damning, must promote a Nation’s Good” (4).
Newcomb’s scope broadens, however, and he imagines the forces of darkness overtaking society:
blasphemy is everywhere, leaders are beloved for bad behavior, irreverence is blithely tolerated, and so
on. This is moral topsy-turvydom, and Newcomb is appalled and indignant. He condemns society in
similar terms in *The Manners of the Age: In Thirteen Moral Satirs [sic]* (1733), but that work is more
resigned than angry. There he laments the human condition, and he does not exclude himself: “The little

52 Other examples of harsh (and often stuffy) social/moral satire are *Hell upon Earth: or the Town in an
Uproar* (1729; 1s) and *Seasonable Admonitions. A Satire* (1740; 1s). *England In Miniature, or Truth to Some Tune*
(1729; 6d) is less heavy-handedly didactic—it is a lightweight survey of social follies—but the author does not
present any positives to offset the negatives he describes.
fame we boast, we give ourselves,” etc. (23). He also concedes the ineffectuality of satire: “folly sprouts
as fast as satire kills” (2). In Blasphemy As Old as Creation, unlike here, he declaims with enough
ferocity to suggest that he hopes his outraged homily will reach someone.

Gloomy social satire. Anger and despondency sometimes co-exist, and distinguishing between
the two is often difficult to do with any confidence. Satires that I call harsh might well be read by
someone else as despairing, and what the writer thought he was communicating—much less feeling—is
hard to say. That said, the distinction is worth attending to. A satire written with purposive fury is not
the same thing as one written in sad acquiescence with no hope for change. 53

In A Satyr. In the Manner of Persius (1730), John, Lord Hervey reflects dolefully that if all
existence is pointless, then ignorance really is bliss:

still the Hour shall come when thou shalt know,
'Tis vain Fruition all, and empty Show;
But late examine, late inspect Mankind,
If seeing Pains, 'tis Prudence to be blind. (5)

Humans are basically not very good: “Their Vice their own, their Virtue but a Part” (7). Their egotism
and unscrupulousness are ample cause to distrust appearances. Speaking as one who has been cheated
and betrayed, the poet concludes,

The Tongue the Heart’s Interpreter I deem’d,
And judg’d of what Men were, by what they seem’d:
I thought each warm Professor meant me fair,
Each supple Sycophant a Friend sincere. (9) 54

Pope, of course, proclaims widespread degeneracy in the Epilogue to the Satires (1738). In The Second
Satire of the Second Book of Horace Paraphrased (Bethel) four years earlier, he had portrayed—says
Weinbrot—“a vision of mankind too brutal to be found in the epistles. In this poem the main object of

53 The distinction between anger and gloom is sometimes subtle but not insignificant. A more familiar
parallel from an earlier period is the contrast between Congreve’s The Way of the World and Southerne’s The Wives’
Excuse. Congreve’s play is a gloomy illustration of a society beyond reform, and Southerne’s is a disgusted
indictment at least potentially meant to compel some viewers to recoil from what they see (and not to accept or
replicate it).

54 See also the anonymous The Wooden Age. A Satyrical Poem. Humbly Inscrib’d to William Pulteney,
Esq: (1733; 6d), which comprises a long list of social, political, and cultural deficiencies without any evident belief
in improvement.
attack is Man, who is ‘all . . . one intestine war’.”\textsuperscript{55} The degree to which Pope is expressing genuine despair or simply assuming a rhetorical pose befitting a moral guardian is difficult to determine, but the content of these satires (and something like the \textit{Sober Advice from Horace} [1734; 1s]) suggests a grim indictment of a thoroughly distasteful society. Pope, however, passes judgment from a high moral position, suggesting that standards \textit{do} exist, that right and wrong can be distinguished. More convincingly despairing is the satiric message, if not the tone, of Gay’s \textit{The Beggar’s Opera}.

\textit{The Beggar’s Opera} is a satiric oddity.\textsuperscript{56} Some of its targets are readily comprehensible: Gay hits at Walpole, mocks Italian opera, and ridicules other literary forms and conventions. The political and cultural satire is undeniable, though the central thrust of the satire is social. Not for nothing does Macheath airily announce that, “Money well tim’d, and properly apply’d, will do any thing.”\textsuperscript{57} None of the characters is unstained by corruption, but Gay hardly writes with fierce indignation. “Government, professions, and aristocracy are cheerfully savaged,” says Hume, “But it is \textit{cheerfully}, and any ‘vehement’ satire is strictly by implication.”\textsuperscript{58} The moral, ultimately, is “the World is all alike”—but, as in some of Gay’s previous satires, this bad news comes in a thoroughly zippy work. How does the \textit{Beggar’s Opera} function as satire? As I argued in chapter 5, Gay might very well be offering his social critique fully aware that nothing can come of it—and so feels little need to scream and bawl—or he might be counting on the reader/viewer to grasp his meaning and worry about it if so inclined. Whatever Gay thinks he is doing, we can be pretty clear on what he is \textit{not} doing. His satire does not represent a systematic attempt to force-feed an uncompromising socio-political argument to his audience.\textsuperscript{59} \textit{The Beggar’s Opera} is not

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{55} \textcite{Weinbrot, The Formal Strain: Studies in Augustan Imitation and Satire (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 138-39; the quotation from Pope is at l. 72.}
\item \textsuperscript{56} \textcite{Much the best discussion of \textit{The Beggar’s Opera} is Hume, “‘The World is all Alike’: Satire in \textit{The Beggar’s Opera},” in Rakish Stage, 245-69.}
\item \textsuperscript{57} \textcite{John Gay, Dramatic Works, ed. John Fuller, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 2:39 (II.xii).}
\item \textsuperscript{58} \textcite{Hume, Rakish Stage, 252. Satirists aplenty vilify the bad, Hume continues, but “Gay undermines our easy and uncritical faith in the good” (268). The quotation (“the World is all alike”) is Macheath’s in III.xiv, at 2:62.}
\item \textsuperscript{59} Brecht’s version (\textit{Dreigroschenoper}) presumes outrage—he clearly wants his audience to reject the grim message and to agitate for change. Gay, however, was not Brecht, and the satiric intent of \textit{Dreigroschenoper} is not that of \textit{The Beggar’s Opera}.}
\end{itemize}
really “like” any other satire in this period. To ignore the nihilism of its apparent moral would be misrepresentative; to call it simply “harsh” or even “cynical” is to privilege the implications of its content over the sunny buoyancy of its tone.

Equally hard to place in any tidy pigeonhole are Swift’s scatological poems, which are more social than political or cultural in scope. *The Lady’s Dressing Room* (wr. 1730; pub. 1732; 6d), *Strephon and Chloe, Cassinus and Peter*, and *A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed* (all three wr. 1731; pub. together in 1734; 1s) forcefully communicate a satiric point, but the tone is somewhat more elusive. As J. A. Downie rightly observes, these works are written out of “a desire to strip man of his pretensions and to remind him of his own mortality and the vanity of human wishes,” and Swift, says David Nokes, “takes a forensic delight in lifting the silk petticoats to expose what lies beneath.”

What lies beneath is rendered in its full unpleasantness in *The Lady’s Dressing Room*. Here the besotted Strephon is revolted by what he finds in his darling’s dressing room:

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But oh! it turn’d poor Strephon’s Bowels,
When he beheld and smelt the Towels,
Begumm’d, bematter’d, and beslim’d
With Dirt, and Sweat, and Ear-Wax grim’d. (ll. 43-47)
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Swift conveys a visceral disgust with the human body, but the serious implications jar rather badly against the tone. *A Beautiful Young Nymph* in particular is marked by what Claude Rawson calls “horrific jauntiness.” About “the facts of squalor and filth, lust and physical ugliness,” Swift is shockingly explicit without being preachy.

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What does this survey tell us? I will reserve some of my conclusions for the end of the chapter, but I would like to offer two observations at this point. The first is that the world I have been describing looks almost nothing like the world covered in chapter 5. Attack- and complaint-mode satire continues, albeit in slightly different forms and in response to ever-changing issues, and so does lightweight social satire.

61 Rawson, *Order from Confusion Sprung*, 162.
Beyond that, very little stays the same. The most interesting forms of satire practiced in the first quarter of the eighteenth century (monitory satire, ideological argumentation) do not continue into the later twenties and thirties. Lumping this period with the quarter century that preceded it is bad methodology, and it is acutely misleading. Second observation: the satires of Pope, Swift, and Gay fit to some degree in several different categories, often imperfectly, but they do not form the beginning and end of the culture of satire even in the years the “Scriblerians” supposedly ruled. Scholars have derived their conclusions about eighteenth-century satire largely from the major works of these writers. I flatly deny that this trio of writers typifies satiric practice in this period—and we need now to consider the extent to which they “go” together at all.

II. Pope, Swift, Gay

That Pope and Swift are satiric twins—walking hand in hand to posterity—is a critical truism whose verity few have doubted. Many thesis-driven books on eighteenth-century satire follow a Swift chapter with a Pope chapter, or they cite examples from Swift’s and Pope’s corpus to “prove” a theme or trend in satiric practice. Scholars do not so much argue similitude as assume it, sometimes with alarming nonchalance. One of the preeminent living critics of eighteenth-century satire defines Scriblerian, in passing, as “Popean, Swiftean”—suggesting that the meanings of “Popean” and “Swiftean” are obvious and uncomplicated (a dubious proposition) and implying that they are equivalent terms. Gay is usually seen not as identical to them but rather as the devoted junior member of the “Scriblerian” enterprise. The Pope-Swift-Gay grouping has apparently struck critics as self-evidently true and right and just, but its soundness has too long gone untested. To assess its legitimacy, we need a better sense of what sort of

63 Hammond is an exception: “contemporaries did not always regard Swift and Pope as entirely inseparable Siamese twins—the Castor and Pollux of Tory satire—as has been a prominent tendency amongst more recent readers” (Professional Imaginative Writing in England, 238-39).

64 Paulson, Hogarth’s Harlot, 68. Paulson describes an interpretation of A Harlot’s Progress as “a Scriblerian (a Popean, a Swiftean) reading.”
satirist each man was in the years from the late twenties to the early forties, the halcyon days of eighteenth-century satire and the period the “Scriblerian mode” is assumed to dominate.

**Pope**

Pope’s satiric output before the first *Dunciad* is, as I argued in the last chapter, distinctly limited and basically remote from our conception of him as moral guardian and cultural custodian. The mature Pope writes a great deal of satire, the concerns of which are variously moral, political, and cultural. His range is not as wide as Swift’s or Fielding’s, but his practice is not uniform. Weinbrot has distinguished between Pope’s satiric and epistolary works, all of which contain judgment but not of the same kind. “In the epistles,” he argues, “man is often sad, often silly, and generally not a danger to anyone but himself.” The satires “are harsher in tone, more apocalyptic in scope, more biting in attack, and less affirmative in vision.”

The *Essay on Man* (1733-34)—a primarily positive enterprise, and a reaffirming rather than destructive satire on man—is epistolary. Only in the satires, as Weinbrot notes, does Pope “deny that whatever is is right.” For my purposes, Weinbrot’s division seems a useful way of dealing with Pope’s satirical poems.

The *Epistles to Several Persons* (1731-35) are less punitive than moralizing, an attempt to provide “a system of Ethics in the Horatian way.” They “often ‘attack,’ but with moderation,” Weinbrot explains, and they “show the poet not as an agent of God, but as a man talking to men.” Pope’s moral vision, says David B. Morris, “is based not on religious dogma or on social theory, but on the perception that certain ways of living are ultimately self-destructive. . . . Moral conduct is quite simply the art of

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65 Weinbrot, *The Formal Strain*, 146, 148-49. The exception, Weinbrot points out, might seem to be *Bathurst*, in which Pope appears to be harshly “attacking the misuse of gold in a political, public fashion.” But, he continues, Pope’s response to the abuse of riches “is not to become the inspired and passionate enemy of gilded Vice; nor does he even show this vice triumph. Instead, he adapts a *reductio ad absurdum* and, on the one hand, throws us backwards in time into a barter system, and on the other predicts future political decay” (146-47). The next quotation is from p. 148.


living well.”

In Cobham, Pope suggests that the characters of men are all but inscrutable, the ruling passion of an individual impossible to discern with confidence in his lifetime, and that man himself is perverse and contradictory. To a Lady illustrates the changeability of the softer sex, though it is not just another misogynistic diatribe; Pope “attempts to educate rather than to lash woman,” and he urges her “to improve so that she in turn can improve man’s life.”

The theme of the sermonic Bathurst is the use and misuse of riches, the effect of wealth on society and the social implications of its abuse. Pope satirizes individuals by name (e.g., Ward, Waters, Chartres), and more generally expresses anxiety about the vagaries of Fortune and “the World’s respect for Gold” (l. 125). He also attempts to illuminate, in Miriam Leranbaum’s phrasing, “the centrality of virtue as the essential basis for individual happiness and eternal salvation.”

In Burlington, Pope returns to themes of taste and expenditure, vanity and ostentation: Timon’s villa, that site of indulgence and extravagance, “is part of the downward antisocial progress in which architect and client cut themselves off from man, nature, and God.” The epistles are negative, ridiculing vice in the form of deviations from Pope’s ideal order of things, often typified by named personages such as Chartres in Bathurst and George Bubb in Burlington. They are also positive, praising living exemplars of virtue (e.g., “brave COBHAM” in the last lines of his epistle) and normative social order.

Elsewhere Pope is more aggressively harsh, and increasingly so late in his career. The first Dunciad is about as playful as he will ever be; his vision grows ever darker, culminating in the 1743 Dunciad, his apocalyptic last word on political cum cultural collapse. Between the first and final versions of his satire on the dunces, he produces his Horatian imitations, beginning with Fortescue (1733). In that

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68 Morris, Alexander Pope, 179.
69 Weinbrot, Alexander Pope, 190.
70 On the “sermonic” nature of this poem, see Mack, Alexander Pope, 513.
73 Weinbrot, Alexander Pope, 185.
74 Weinbrot rightly observes that, “The direction of Pope’s career as a formal verse satirist is from an essentially Horatian ethic epistle like Burlington (1731), to mingled satire with a variety of Horatian, Juvenalian, and Persian emphases, to the overwhelmingly Juvenalian-Persian elevation and gloom of the Epilogue to the Satires (1738)” (Alexander Pope, 331).
poem, Pope deviates significantly from his model, both in tone (especially late in the poem he becomes more and more Juvenalian) and in the explicit identification of his targets. The political satire is clear enough, as Pope condemns the current ministry and surveys the corruption for which it is to blame. Bethel (1734; Sat. II.i.; 1s) is a combination of generalized satire, in which Pope decries the folly of greed and gluttony and exalts the virtue of restraint and moderation, and particularized Juvenalian castigation of named individuals. The poet “locates many of the vices attacked, not in the human situation or the rich in general, but in the court that mirrors Sir Robert—who was known for his generous appetite, girth, and, the opposition claimed, wealth used tastelessly and for selfish ends.” He returns again and again to this theme in his imitations, deploiring the fallen world around him from a position of isolated superiority, and implicitly or explicitly impugning Walpole and the dubious morality of the Hanoverian court. By 1738, Pope perceives vice triumphant. In the Epilogue to the Satires, the poet is embattled and outnumbered, forced to confront irrevocably degenerate squalor and to admit that issuing sage counsel about the path to virtue is ultimately only whistling in the dark.

Pope’s satires have antagonism aplenty, and the imitations are clearly Oppositional insofar as they are political. They are increasingly combative and cynical or despairing, though at least through Walpole’s fall in 1742, Pope seems to imagine that a governmental change might ameliorate the revolting socio-cultural problems he perceives. In his epistolary satire, he discourses on vice and virtue, satirizing aberrations from the high road but ultimately preaching the ethical life to his readers as one who lives beyond reproof. The satirist is well-trained in this rigorous socio-moral code and sermonizes on that code for the benefit (he hopes) of an educable audience. That reformation is the sole objective is unlikely: how many readers enthusiastically heed the obiter dicta of a preacher expounding upon good and evil? In his moral and political satires, Pope is always both judge and artist. At once rendering a verdict on society and insisting on his own remoteness from it, he is at least as concerned with determining and reaffirming his position as cultural custodian as he is on having an effect on the world around him.

75 Weinbrot, Alexander Pope, 281.
Swift

Swift’s most celebrated satire from this period is, of course, *Gulliver’s Travels*, which I will deal with at length in the next section. For now, what needs to be said is that *Gulliver* is not representative of his satiric output, either in this period or in the previous quarter century. Neither does it have much in common, excepting a few particular targets, with the satiric practice of Swift’s fellow “Scriblerians” or any of his lesser-known contemporaries. It is a sometimes funny, sometimes corrosive, and undeniably brilliant satire, and it is also singularly peculiar. In addition to *Gulliver*, in this period Swift writes *A Modest Proposal* (1729), *Polite Conversation* (pub. 1738), *Directions to Servants* (pub. 1745; 1s 6d) and a fairly varied bunch of satiric poems.

Most satire scholars (as opposed to Swiftians) too often forget that, for the better part of this heyday of English “Augustan” satire, Swift—the Drapier and the Dean—lived in Ireland and thought Irish thoughts. *A Modest Proposal* is only the best-known of his Irish satires of this period. The satiric argument in this mock-scheme for economic stability through cannibalism has been pretty well understood: he lashes English oppression, but he also indicts the Irish, both ruling and ruled.76 Swift takes Ireland’s dire plight seriously. In a 1730 broadside called *An Excellent New Ballad: or, The true English Man to be hang’d for a Rape*, he explores the “sexual dimension of England’s oppressive behavior” toward Ireland—the last word of every stanza in this high-heat satire is “R[ape].”77 The incendiary *Libel on Dr. Delany* (1730; 6d) satirizes Walpole, but it is also a vitriolic commentary on England’s mistreatment of Ireland: the Irish Lord Lieutenant Carteret “comes to drain a Beggar’s Purse: / He comes to tye our Chains on faster, / And shew us, England is our Master” (ll. 124-26). A dangerous

76 As Rawson argues, “It is not surprising that the targets of Swift’s Irish satires cannot always, and are not always meant to, be clearly distinguished from one another, nor that Swift’s allegiances as between the English, the Anglo-Irish and the natives, are blurred and irrationally fluctuating things, whose very confusions provide the essential energies of his style” (*Order from Confusion Sprung*, 129).

77 The quotation is from Fabricant, *Swift’s Landscape*, 85.
work, the Libel “indicted the King’s representative in Ireland of corruption, and openly suggested that he
was merely following orders from England.”

In the late twenties and thirties, Swift writes invective after blistering invective against Irish
dignitaries who are now not even names to most students of the satire—versus Lord Allen, who tried to
force the prosecution of the printer and author of A Libel on D[elany], in Traulus (two parts; 1730);
versus a group of Irish bishops, and in defense of the lower clergy, in On the Irish Bishops (1732) and
Judas (wr. 1731/2; pub. 1735); versus Sir Thomas Prendergast, whom Swift regarded “as an inveterate
enemy of the clergy,” in On Noisy Tom (wr. 1736). He drubs Prendergast (inter alia) again in A
Character, Panegyric, and Description of the Legion Club (1736), a sadistic diatribe against the Irish
parliament. Rawson observes that this poem is one of Swift’s few genuine excursions into Juvenalian
satire. Carole Fabricant reminds us that, “Swift’s mock-epic descent into the hellish interior of the
Parliament House is on one level a satiric fantasy . . . but when we realize the conditions in which Swift
actually lived, we are less likely to attribute this passage to satiric convention or psychological fixation
only and more inclined to consider its relationship to external realities.” The targets of these topical
squibs include both notables and small fry. For Swift, fair game includes anyone on the wrong side of a
policy issue or debate. His Irish invectives tend to be stingingly personal, reflective of manifest
defensiveness and hostility, forcefully present-centered and issue-based—and ultimately very little
concerned with the particulars of English politics or letters.

Swift does on occasion commit his satiric energies to English affairs. I have already dealt with
his attacks on Walpole in On Mr. P[ultene]y being put out of the Council, The Character of Sir Robert
Walpole, To Mr. Gay, An Epistle to a Lady, and most ferociously in A Libel on D[elany]. The Libel

78 Downie, Jonathan Swift, Political Writer, 314. The Libel almost got Swift into trouble: the Irish
parliament seriously considered prosecuting the printer and the author, though nothing came of it.
79 The Poems of Jonathan Swift, ed. Williams, 3:824. Other examples include attacks on Richard Tighe (a
member of the Irish Parliament) in Mad Mullinix and Timothy and Tim and the Fables (both 1728), and on Richard
Bettesworth (another Irish MP and sergeant-at-law) in On the Words—Brother Protestants, and Fellow Christians,
so familiarly used by the Advocates for the Repeal of the Test Act in Ireland, 1733 (1733) and in The Yahoo’s
Overthrow; or, The Kevan Bayl’s New Ballad, upon Serjeant Kite’s insulting the Dean (wr. 1734; pub. 1765).
80 Rawson, Order from Confusion Sprung, 151; Fabricant, Swift’s Landscape, 31.
defends Swift’s English writer friends and is audaciously aggressive in its denunciation of the Great Man. *On Poetry: A Rapsody* (1733; 1s) connects bad literature and crooked politics: “The vilest Verse thrives best at Court,” he seethes, for “A Pamphlet in Sir Rob’s Defence / Will never fail to bring in Pence” (ll. 186, 187-88). A less explicitly sour but thematically similar satire is his *Directions for a Birth-day Song*, which denigrates ministerial pens and undercuts the personages whom they so obsequiously flatter. These poems—together with the political hits in *Gulliver’s Travels*—represent the totality of the Dean’s substantive satiric commentary on matters strictly English. Swift’s hostility toward Walpole and his protectiveness of Gay and other wits is obviously strong and deeply-felt, but he spent the vast majority of these years on Irish soil, and his satiric focus in the second half of his life is almost entirely on Ireland.

Not all of Swift’s satires are limited to a single country or group of people. The scatological poems discussed in section I—*The Lady’s Dressing Room, Strephon and Chloe, Cassinus and Peter,* and *A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed*—are grossly physical statements on the whole human condition. Swift’s political invectives are painfully unambiguous exercises in destructive defamation: judgment is being rendered. The scatological poems unquestionably communicate unpleasant realities, but they are also at least potentially more complex. In *Strephon and Chloe,* the eponymous newlyweds immediately lose their bashfulness once alone together, becoming mutually comfortable to the point (Swift suggests) of arrant indecency.

They learn to call a Spade, a Spade.  
They soon from all Constraint are freed;  
Can see each other *do their Need.*  
On Box of Cedar sits the Wife,  
And makes it warm for *Dearest Life.* (ll. 204-08)

The couple sheds the pretence of delicate purity (a good thing), but in so doing they also abandon decency (not so good). If “‘Decency’ itself is a mere social fiction,” Rawson argues, “Swift would nevertheless not do without it. The ambiguity, or impasse, is characteristic. Between the civilised lie and the beastly truth, the middle way is hard to find. The poem may seem to warn the Strephons against poetic fictions which impute aethereality to the fair sex. But the moral is not quite so cozy as the commonsense critics
would have it.”

Swift’s political satires have an implicit set of positives, even if they are wholly unattainable. The positives in the scatological poems are much harder to discern.

Swift’s other satires of this period do not fall into tidy categories. *Polite Conversation* satirizes London (not Irish) society, obviously reflecting something of Swift’s erstwhile immersion in that world. Although the piece was not published until 1738, he had evidently been collecting material for upwards of thirty years before completion. Swift’s concern in *Polite Conversation* is with linguistic abuse. He ridicules the clichéd speech and laughable affectation of high society, dignifying “these meaningless vacuities with the mock-order of an artistic form.” Swift transforms the list of hackneyed expressions into a comedy of manners, which is lightweight but tediously protracted. A sort of companion piece to *Polite Conversation* is *Directions to Servants* (pub. 1745; incomplete), which sardonically “chronicles the speech . . . of society below stairs.” These works are obviously related to *Mrs. Harris’s Petition* (1701) and *Mary the Cook-Maid’s Letter to Dr. Sheridan* (1718), lively satiric mimicries of servant-speak. They are playful, a world away from the acid invectives of his political verse and the bitter ironies of *A Modest Proposal*.

The other oddity in Swift’s late-life satiric oeuvre is the difficult *Verses on the Death of Dr. S[swift], D. S. P. D.* (wr. 1731; pub. 1739; 1st†), which comprises imagined responses to his demise and a sort of *apologia pro vita sua*. The tones and ironies of the poem fluctuate from self-abuse to self-defense and self-praise, and Swift’s attitude toward his accomplishments is not at all straightforward.

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81 Rawson, *Order from Confusion Sprung*, 164.
82 In a letter to Pope dated 12 June 1732, Swift refers to this work as a project continued from the past: “I have a thing in prose, begun above twenty-eight years ago, and almost finished” (Correspondence, 3:490).
84 *Directions to Servants* was published after Swift’s death and two contradictory manuscripts exist. On the fearful mess associated with this text, see Philip Gaskell, *From Writer to Reader: Studies in Editorial Method* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), Example 4 (pp. 80-100).
87 Stephen Karian has convincingly argued that “Swift intended his text to appear with gaps and blanks,” thereby allowing for different readers to fill in allusions in different ways. Karian suggests that parts of the *Verses* might have “existed in either no authoritative form or in multiple authoritative forms. This situation calls for reader
the final section, one respondent to the Dean’s death waxes eulogistic, and the poem becomes a memorial to Swift’s life (“Fair LIBERTY was all his Cry,” etc.). This panegyric has caused problems for critics.88 It is ironic, but not only ironic. Self-mocking he may be, but Swift is cataloguing deeds of which he is sincerely proud. In what remains the best discussion of the Verses, Arthur H. Scouten and Hume describe the Dean’s exercise as a teasingly provocative, “half-genuine apologia.”89 The poem is extraordinary, and it deserves the appreciation it has had, but as a satire it is like nothing else in Swift’s canon, and like nothing done by his contemporaries. He had tried a version of the poetic self-defense before, in The Life and Genuine Character of Doctor Swift (pub. 1733), of which he disingenuously denied authorship.90 The earlier apologia is lighter in tone and less ironically complex than the Verses, and its pro-Swift speaker is more grandiloquent in his defense. The Life and Genuine Character is usually taken as an experimental forerunner of the Verses, but it is a significantly different work, and Swift was clearly dissatisfied with the results.

Swift’s satiric practice in the first quarter of the eighteenth century included derisive mockery, violent abuse, defensive propaganda, argumentation, and anxiously monitory satire. His targets and objectives were sometimes brutally clear and sometimes upsettingly indeterminate. In the roughly two decades at issue here, his output is interestingly assorted but not in the same way. He writes a great deal of bloody-minded invective against targets of whose identity there can be little doubt. His attacks on ministerial mistreatment of poets are defensive, though that defensiveness is as much of his friends as it is of his political commitments. His responses to Ireland’s plight—his brutal indictment of English involvement, even as it places limits on the possibilities of such involvement.” See “Reading the Material Text of Swift’s Verses on the Death,” Studies in English Literature 41 (2001): 515-44, at 531.

88 As Scouten and Hume observe, “the poem has been damned for exaggerated self-praise, defended for the ‘ironic intention’ of that praise, taken as a serious apologia pro vita sua, and read as a seventeenth-century style religious meditation on death. No agreement at all has been reached about the basic nature of the poem” (“Pope and Swift,” 205).

89 Scouten and Hume, “Pope and Swift,” 231.

90 In a letter to Pope dated 1 May 1733, Swift hotly insists that, “in this Spurious piece, there is not a single line, or bit of a line, or thought, any way resembling the genuin Copy,” grumbling that he “would sink to be a Vicar in Norfolk rather than be charged with such a performance” (Correspondence, 3:636). In a 31 May letter to Oxford, he repeats his charge, calling the Life and Genuine Character a “spurious” poem (651).
oppression and Irish folly—are vehement, and while Swift might not have thought anything could change, he certainly wrote with the conviction that it should. His non-straightforward satires in this period, *Gulliver* and the *Verses*, are very little “like” his difficult satires in the previous quarter century. The Bickerstaff pamphlets are playful enough, but they and the others (*A Tale of a Tub*, the reply to Collins, the *Argument against Abolishing Christianity*) are all disconcerting, raising questions about deceptiveness and the hazards of credulity. *Gulliver*’s difficulties are of another sort, and the *Verses*—while sometimes mystifying—is not especially unsettling. The monitory satire that he practiced early in the century (roughly speaking, 1704-1713) does not reappear in his late-life output. Swift’s satiric practice, like that of his contemporaries, suggests marked discontinuity between the first and second quarters of the century. What does stay the same, for Swift at least, is the fierce energy of his satiric judgment. He is sometimes content to mock, but where his commitments are the strongest, he is capable of unrestraint and rage. He sometimes despairs of being able to effect change, but he absolutely wants and tries to influence the present.

*Gay*

In his earlier works, Gay mostly worried about social and cultural issues. In the late twenties and early thirties, his primary concerns are not cultural but social and political. His importance to satire in this period has much to do with the success of *The Beggar’s Opera*, a play that is wonderfully high-spirited in its presentation despite its bleak implications. Tonally speaking, *The Beggar’s Opera* is considerably less glum than *The Dunciad*, but its satiric message is more cynical.91 The discordance between content and presentation in Gay’s satire does not begin with *The Beggar’s Opera*: in *The Fan*, *Trivia*, and *The What d’ye Call It*, he had also leavened potentially trenchant satire by means of generic or tonal lightness. *Polly*, the sequel to *The Beggar’s Opera*, is a not-very-innocent political application satire that was immediately suppressed and not staged in Gay’s lifetime. Like its predecessor, *Polly* comprises incisive

91 “To be made to realize that ‘the world is all alike’ is both risible and sobering,” Hume concludes: “The implications are serious enough, but they are also a dead end, for . . . there are no remedies” (*Rakish Stage*, 268).
socio-political criticism that is diffused by its cheerful ballad opera form: “the familiar objects are repetitiously lambasted,” Richard W. Bevis concludes, “until a jingle dissipates the gloom.”  

Gay’s other late-life satires are variously political. The first series of Fables (1727), presumably written for the edification of the young Prince William, were undoubtedly part of Gay’s ongoing struggle to find patronage. The favorite themes of Opposition satirists are omnipresent—the animal tales involve corruption, treachery, flattery—but this is not partisan satire. Gay’s moral and political commentary is highly generalized, no more applicable to dishonest politicians than to wayward nobodies. Scholars agree that the 1727 Fables’ morality, political or otherwise, is not to be taken all that seriously. The second series of Fables (pub. posthumously in 1738) is less universal than topical: “the Morals of most of ’em are of the political kind,” Gay wrote to Swift. The author of the 1727 Fables had been amiable, self-mocking, and ironic; the satirist of the later series is judgmental and angry. “In almost all these new fables,” Nokes explains, “the corrupt minister, surrounded by his sycophantic tribe of pimps, spies, and placemen, is finally exposed and defeated by the valiant voice of honesty and virtue.”

Also published posthumously was The Rehearsal at Goatham (c. 1730; pub. 1754; 1s†), a one-act comedy mocking the governmental paranoia that leads to censorship. The satire indicates real frustration on Gay’s part, as does The Distress’d Wife, a satiric comedy on the London bon ton staged in 1734 (eighteenth months after Gay’s death). The play is not terribly interesting as drama, Nokes argues, but it does reveal “the unusual intensity of Gay’s feelings of disillusionment,” presenting “an uncomfortable

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92 Bevis, English Drama, 169.
93 The oddity in Gay’s late-life career is Achilles (pub. posthumously in 1733), a ribald, farcical satire on sexual identity (the Homeric hero spends the play garbed in female attire), fashionable attitudes toward sex, and on the ways of women. The piece includes political hits en passant, but the whole affair is pretty lightweight.
94 Patricia M. Spacks argues that the individual anthropomorphic tales “shed a comic light on man and is pretensions.” See “John Gay: A Satirist’s Progress,” Essays in Criticism 14 (1964): 156-70, at 164. Says Nokes: “Though the Fables are often serious, they are never solemn. With a deft, self-mocking skill, Gay exploits the nursery charm of his animal philosophers, creating a farmyard Lilliput where social satire blends with the magical delights of childhood fantasy” (John Gay, 385).
96 Nokes, John Gay, 505.
parade of predictable motifs as empty and mechanical as the rituals of life it describes.” The tone is one of moral indignation and disgust; the picture of dissolute Court life is unrelievedly negative, and Gay makes his hostility toward place-hunting very clear. The second series of Fables, Rehearsal at Goatham, and The Distress’d Wife, all of which clearly belong to the post-Polly period in Gay’s life, reflect genuine personal disappointment and acute animosity.

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How much do the writers I have just described have in common as satirists? Pope, Swift, and Gay are almost always understood as a “Scriblerian” trio banded together against the forces of dullness and evil. I have just covered their late-life satiric canons more or less in toto. What is the common ground? Gay is something of a distraction, so I will deal with him only briefly before focusing my attention on Pope and Swift.

Gay’s satires are extraordinarily unlike Pope’s and Swift’s. With the exception of the Fables, they are plays, and the Fables are sufficiently dissimilar from the works of his friends that even scholars keen to enlarge the “Scriblerus” canon do not canonize them. He is only alive for six of the years covered in this chapter, dying in 1732—a year before the publication of Pope’s first Horatian imitation, a fact worth remembering. Gay’s place in this triumvirate depends largely on The Beggar’s Opera, one of the three late-twenties tours de force of the so-called “Scriblerian” enterprise. Conventional wisdom tells us that Gulliver’s Travels, The Beggar’s Opera, and the first Dunciad represent the preeminent manifestations of a joint satiric mission, and that they somehow exemplify a cohesive and widely-influential mode of eighteenth-century satire. These works are unquestionably masterpieces penned by friends and sometime allies, but they are not the same sort of satire. Gulliver’s Travels is a scatter-shot attack on any number of targets, some readily comprehensible and some not. Precious little consensus

97 Nokes, John Gay, 496.

98 Says Seidel in 2005: “The Scriblerians organised for the sole purpose of out-modernising the moderns. Theirs was a joint-venture company of abusive parody directed at popular public culture, government spoils and the expanded world of hack writers and periodical publishing”; see “Systems satire: Swift.com,” in The Cambridge History of English Literature, 1660-1780, ed. Richetti, 235-58, at 250). He also refers to “the Scriblerian satirist” (251) as a distinct type, a descriptor treated as equally applicable to Pope, Swift, Gay, and Arbuthnot.
has been reached about what Swift was actually trying to do in this work. Gay’s satire is wonderfullly
bouncy, but his conclusion—“the World is all alike”—destroys the difference between Good and Bad so
fundamental to the major satires of Pope and Swift. Whereas Gay implies that the satirist is no better than
his targets, Pope blasts the loathsome dunces and energetically separates himself from them. In
technique, tone, targets, and aim, these represent very different concepts of satire—and neither the known
friendship of the authors nor the woolly details of the “Scriblerian” connection seems to justify the long-
standing certitude that they somehow “go” together. Gay is almost always regarded as the lesser
practitioner of the satiric mode perfected by Pope and Swift. In point of fact, he looks nothing like either
of them (and what he does, he does quite well). More important than Gay’s position vis-à-vis his
“Scriblerian” comrades, however, is their position vis-à-vis each other.

Pope and Swift scholars of course recognize the significant differences between what those
writers do, but in accounts of eighteenth-century satire, they tend to become the premier practitioners of a
basically unified mode of satire (“Augustan,” “Scriblerian”). The focus is all too much on their
similarities. Phillip Harth is the only critic systematically to challenge the interconnectedness of Pope’s
and Swift’s practices.99 His discussion of their relations in the 1730s is sound and refreshingly
commonsensical in its admission of disparities between those two writers. I am much indebted to his
study, but he makes his case in an understated way, and he does not emphasize some of the more
powerful implications of his argument. I want to add to Harth’s analysis, and more explicitly to dispute
the enduring notion that Pope and Swift are Siamese satirists.

The early satiric careers of Pope and Swift are remarkably unrelated. Most critics associate them
in the first quarter of the eighteenth century because of the so-called “Scriblerus Club” meetings (1714),

99 Harth, “Friendship and Politics: Swift’s Relations with Pope in the Early 1730s,” Reading Swift: Papers
from The Third Münster Symposium on Jonathan Swift, ed. Hermann J. Real and Helgard Stöver-Leidig (München:
Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1998), 239-48. Since I drafted this chapter, Dustin Griffin has very kindly allowed me to read
portions of his Swift and Pope: “Conversing Interchangeably” in advance of publication. He has helpfully
extended and further documented the position sketched by Harth—a position with which I strongly concur.
but the *Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus* did not come out until 1741 (in Dublin), and if Swift’s enthusiasm for that project lasted beyond 1714, we have no evidence of it. Swift’s satires in the first quarter of the eighteenth century are almost invariably the stuff of politics and propaganda—they belong to the world of *POAS*, and in that regard their author shares more with Defoe than with Pope. They are grittily partisan, often belligerently and vindictively personal, and there are a lot of them. Pope’s early satires are essentially non-existent. *The Rape of the Lock* and the *Essay on Criticism* are only barely satirical; “Worms,” the lines on Addison, and the burlesque of the first psalm (all discussed in chapter 5) are, in George Sherburn’s phrasing, “firecracker squibs such as a clever schoolboy might produce.”

Swift is 36 years old when *Tale* appears; Pope is about to turn 16. They would become friends, sometime political allies, and co-producers (after a fashion) of the *Miscellanies*, but they are of different generations, different religions, and different social classes and backgrounds. Their satiric targets are sometimes the same: both Pope and Swift deride the Great Man, the corruption of his ministry, the injustices of patronage, bad poets, and so on. Both believe that society is mostly getting worse; their visions increasingly darken over the course of the 1730s. They have mutual friends and they discuss their work together. Similarities in satiric practice are, however, decidedly limited.

The most crucial difference between Swift and Pope as satirists is one that both men fully recognized—involvement in the world versus desired isolation from it. In a letter to Pope (1 June 1728), Swift highlights the distinctions between them:

> what I do is owing to perfect rage and resentment, and the mortifying sight of slavery, folly, and baseness about me, among which I am forc’d to live. And I will take my oath that you have more Virtue in an hour, than I in seven years; for you despise the follies, and hate the vices of mankind, without the least ill effect on your temper; and with regard to particular men, you are inclin’d always rather to think the better, whereas with me it is always directly contrary. (*Correspondence*, 3:184)

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100 *Memoirs of Scriblerus* was first published in Dublin; it was printed in London later the same year in the second volume of Pope’s *Works*. That volume was wildly expensive, priced at £1 1s or, if one opted for the “cheaper” folio, a mere 10s 6d (somewhere between £100 and £150 in modern terms at the lower price). The ESTC does not report a separate London edition of this work.

As Harth points out, Swift “is not confessing his moral inferiority to his friend so much as he is defining himself in response . . . to a theme that had been growing increasingly prominent” in Pope’s letters—the latter’s ever more insistent celebration of “the virtues of retirement, indifference to the world, and calmness of temper.”\(^\text{102}\) While Pope was commending the glories of isolation, Swift was becoming ever more resentful about the plight of Ireland: “These evils [e.g., importing too much from England] operate more every day, and the kingdom is absolutely undone, as I have been telling it often in print these ten years past,” he writes to Pope in 1729. After another such communiqué, Pope’s tolerance wanes: “Your continual deplorings of Ireland, make me wish, you were here long enough to forget those scenes that so afflict you.”\(^\text{103}\) Harth translates Pope’s response as his urging Swift “to acquire some much-needed indifference, like Pope himself.”\(^\text{104}\) Pope is equally clear on the distinctions between him and his friend:

> I have not the courage however to be such a Satyrist as you, but I would be as much, or more, a Philosopher. You call your satires, Libels; I would rather call my satires, Epistles: They will consist more of morality than wit, and grow graver, which you will call duller. (20 April 1733; Correspondence, 3:631)

Pope, says Harth, was “bored by what he preferred to call ‘Hibernian Politicks’”—that is, by what was ultimately central to Swift’s late-life satiric career.\(^\text{105}\) Swift was in Ireland unwilling and unable to retreat from the dire realities of his country; Pope was in England entreatng his friend to join him above the fray. Johnson would later recount Swift’s response to Pope’s tendency to affect world-weariness: Swift would inform his friend, writes Johnson, that he “had not yet either acted or suffered enough in the world to have become weary of it.”\(^\text{106}\)

These letters only reinforce what ought to be glaringly obvious from their works: Pope is an artist, Swift a socio-political warrior. Pope is working from and to general propositions, and though he sometimes produces specific examples to illustrate the broader philosophical points of his satires, his

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\(^{102}\) Harth, “Friendship and Politics,” 240.

\(^{103}\) Swift’s letter is at Correspondence, 3:245 (11 August 1729); the response is at 3:272 (28 November 1729).

\(^{104}\) Harth, “Friendship and Politics,” 241.

\(^{105}\) Harth, “Friendship and Politics,” 247.

\(^{106}\) The Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets, ed. Lonsdale, 4:60.
concern is not for the particular. “Pope’s seemingly God-like vision comprehends the entire world in one sweeping glance,” Fabricant justly concludes, and “Swift had little to do with the exalted status and efficacy of this kind of God-like spectator. . . . Swift, in much of his verse, portrays himself as a figure in, rather than overlooking, the landscape.”

Pope’s subject matter is sometimes particularized, and he depicts himself in specific settings like Twickenham or Timon’s villa, but he issues his commentary from a pulpit. He himself is well above the muck and mire he criticizes—and he knows it. This is not to say that Pope never deals in grunge (as he clearly does in *The Dunciad*), or that he cannot be personally nasty. His attack on Hervey and others in the *Epistle to Arbuthnot* is highly individuated abuse. But in that *Epistle*, he is ultimately concerned with defending himself (“Whom have I hurt?” [l. 95]) and with presenting himself to posterity. In a 1743 letter to Warburton, he looks forward to the appearance of Warburton’s elaborately annotated edition of “the Epistles & Essay on Crit. &c.”: “I know it is there I shall be seen most to advantage.”

Pope is worried about the well-being of his person and his reputation, both now and hereafter. Such an issue is never Swift’s driving force. Pope broadens out; Swift zeroes in. Pope defines himself as a highly literary, profoundly moral verse satirist; Swift is a patriotic activist fiercely and sometimes rashly committed to particular causes. Pope is a master versifier of astounding technical skill. In great poetry, general thought, and high morality, few could rival him in his age or any other. Pope out-artists and out-philosophizes Swift every time. The Dean’s métier is not high-flown moral sentiment. As a poet he is mostly undistinguished, and his subjects are often distinctly non-literary—but he is a passionate topical interventionist and a fiendishly effective commentator on the particular. I would not claim that Swift had no artistic ambition, but in the bulk of his satiric output he seems to want primarily to maim people, not to dazzle them with erudition and technical proficiency.

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107 Fabricant, *Swift’s Landscape*, 197, 198.
108 The “specific issues of the day,” as Fabricant rightly insists, “did not lend themselves to the kind of satire Pope was trying to write; they did not provide suitable subject matter for a poet seeking both to translate complex ideological issues into clear-cut moral categories and to address posterity” (“Pope’s Moral, Political, and Cultural Combat,” 174). As Fabricant goes on to say, this is at least one reason “we encounter a vacuum when we try to identify specific topical events and issues to explain his satiric agenda” (183).
109 *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, 4:448 (the letter is dated 24 March 1742/3).
Pope scholars have wanted to see him as politically combative, but Swift is the satirist who participates in actual fights in the real world throughout his career. Swift is deep into everyday political issues—the proposed repeal of the Test Act, the Irish bishops’ policies, Wood’s half-pence, Irish imports from England. On what particular issues does Pope actually engage in combat? He grumbles mightily about Walpole and he is plenty unhappy about the rewards system in place. But, with the exception of the *Epilogue to the Satires* poems, mostly he perches well above the battleground. Pope’s late-life satires are undeniably politicized—they rehearse all the Opposition charges against Walpole’s England—but next to Swift’s ferocious invectives they look relatively tame. Swift wants to have an effect on the world around him. Even if he believes that nothing will change, he is either boldly willing to risk everything in the attempt or dangerously incapable of restraint. Swift has the capacity for rage, even when rage is imprudent. Again and again, he finds himself a hunted man. Pope’s political critiques are usually delivered at a high level of moral sobriety and aimed at an upper-end niche audience of erudite, philosophically-interested readers; much of his political commentary would have been diffused by the grandiosity of the presentation. A modern reader of Swift’s political verse satires might want footnotes, but the satiric thrust tends to need very little exposition. When he slams the Great Man, he does so in words of one syllable—minus allusive frosting—for anyone willing to glance at the passage.

The exception in Pope’s output, the place where his political satire shares the most with Swift, is a pair of 1738 satires, *One Thousand Seven Hundred and Thirty-Eight* and its sequel, the two poems printed together as *Epilogue to the Satires*. Here Pope’s protest against Walpolean corruption is more direct and explicit than it had ever been. “His political partiality was too plainly shewn,” Johnson said: “he forgot the prudence with which he passed, in his earlier years, uninjured and unoffending through much more violent conflicts of fashion.” The explicitness of his satire attracted the government’s attention, and Pope got scared. He never again “attempted to join the patriot with the poet, nor drew his pen upon statesmen.”

“less willing than Swift to jeopardize his safety,” and he himself admits to lacking the “courage” for Swiftian satire. In 1738 he tried to assume a hard-line position; two years later he wrote another bitter, politicized satire, a fragment called *One Thousand Seven Hundred and Forty*, where he expresses fear of physical and legal reprisal for saying touchy things about the Great Man. But Pope evidently lost his nerve, and the later poem was not published in his lifetime. Swift and Pope seem to share some political principles—but Swift is involved, contentious, and defiant, while Pope is for the most part much more general, platitudinous, and risk-averse.

Scholars tend to emphasize correspondences among their favorite writers, and both Pope and Swift have suffered from this inclination. The longstanding association of these two (and, to a lesser extent, Gay) has relied too much on generalization: a “Scriblerian” satire is “a parody of serious forms of art,” or one that participates in the “crusade against modern dullness.” A recent critic defines the shared agenda of Swift’s circle thusly: “their work takes shape as attacks on systems in contemporary life that exist in large measure as the products of their own exaggerated invention.” If we want to put Swift and Pope into the same pigeonhole, then that pigeonhole needs to be more than expansive. Neither Pope nor Swift is unitary and consistent: the *Essay on Man* is not *The Dunciad*, and *A Libel on Dr. Delany* is not *A Tale of a Tub*. Neither are they similar entities. A few common targets, a close but limited friendship, and some collaboration whose details remain nebulous—such is the extent of the Pope-Swift satiric union. I suspect that Pope would be scandalized to find himself considered “like” the Hibernian Patriot in satiric terms, and Swift would almost certainly be nettled by that identification. In level of

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111 Harth, “Politics and Friendship,” 247. Harth explains that Pope excluded Swift’s *Libel on Dr. Delany* from their 1732 *Miscellanies* as part of an effort “to dissociate himself from the attitudes expressed in Swift’s poem.” Pope lacked Swift’s political temerity, Harth explains, and, more important, he was much more conservative in his political beliefs: “From such a perspective, how could he be expected to react with anything but surprise and puzzlement at such alarming political sentiments—not just their intemperate language—as he found expressed with increasing frequency in Swift’s later political poems” (243, 247).


intensity, form, priorities, practice and purpose, they were radically dissimilar satirists—and they well knew it.

III. *Gulliver and the problem of Swiftian satire*

*Gulliver’s Travels* (1726) is the best-known satire of the eighteenth century, and critical dispute over its essential position is the great battle in the realm of eighteenth-century satire. I recognize the disproportion of devoting an entire section to a single work in a sweeping survey, but one cannot really cover satiric practice in this period without taking a stance on this particular satire. Because Swift is widely regarded as “far and away the dominant satirist of his age,”¹¹⁴ and because the *Travels* was so popular and so widely imitated, critics have tended to see this work as somehow central to or characteristic of “Scriblerian” satire. Scholars are entirely confident of its defining importance to eighteenth-century satire, but what it “means” is an unsettled issue. Or perhaps I should say that numerous critics have pronounced confidently on its meaning, but without managing to arrive at anything like consensus on it. Many specifics of Swift’s satire are pretty well understood and agreed on, such as the attack on Walpole and the parody of travel literature. What remains contested are the larger issues of the overall object of the satire and what it tells us about Swift’s values and his view of the world. A committed adherent of the “hard” interpretation will object at this point that other readings are merely misinterpretations.¹¹⁵ I confess to finding the hard-line reading both attractive and plausible, but I do not believe that it is demonstrable from the text, and a large number of critics continue to read the book in different, often highly contradictory, ways. In these circumstances, I think we have to ask two questions. First, what is the nature of the satire in *Gulliver*? And second, what are we to make of the seeming

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impasse surrounding it? Answering those questions ought to make plain the oddity of this work and to remind us just how little it fits in the satiric culture of this period.

*Writing Swiftian satire*

I have argued elsewhere that studying imitations of Swift’s satire helps us better understand what he is and is not doing in *Gulliver’s Travels*. I will not rehearse my discussion of individual exemplars of “Gulliveriana” here, but I will summarize the conclusions generated by a comparison of them with Swift’s original. While Swift’s most engaged imitators reproduce the features of the *Travels*, they depart fundamentally from the original in their application of those features. The disparity between imitations and original is readily comprehensible in the handling of the three primary components of Swift’s satire. (1) *The relationship of the protagonist to the satirist.* Swift’s Gulliver is a protean figure, moving “back and forth on a scale ranging from antithesis to Swift to identification.” This perpetual motion vis-à-vis the satirist makes Swift difficult to locate in the satire. The imitators’ Gullivers tend to function in their respective texts as unvarying puppets, easily comprehensible mouthpieces for easily comprehensible satire. We almost always know how we are to take what the protagonist is saying, and how we are meant to understand the satire. (2) *Degree of obfuscation and clarity of target.* Despite extraneous mystification, the imitations convey a particular point; they make a sustained, cogent argument that is readily communicated and easily understood. Swift’s obfuscation is no mere external feature, but seems designed profoundly to disrupt any definitive interpretation. (3) *The presence of an alternative society in juxtaposition to a recognizable real world.* Swiftian imitations always use remote lands—sometimes utopias, sometimes dystopias, sometimes mirror images of the native country, and sometimes a mixture of

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117 In the longer version of this argument, I distinguish between those superficial and more engaged imitations. The authors of the former are clearly trying to exploit the popularity of all things Gulliverian, and though they are often fun and clever in their own right, most have very little to do with, or to tell us about, the original. A smaller number of imitations reflect serious efforts to replicate and deploy Swiftian satiric techniques, and those are the pieces of Gulliveriana on which my conclusions are based.

these elements—and the contemporary reader is invited to compare the world (or worlds) in the satire and the world being satirized. The imitators use remote lands in straightforward ways. They do not necessarily show an ideal and its opposite, but they do clearly distinguish virtue from vice. Swift does not always offer such patent demarcation between positives and negatives.

These three satiric features function in all cases to signal the presence of satire, but in the imitations they also clearly communicate how we are to interpret that satire, which is not true of the *Travels*. Swiftian imitations are noticeably more simplistic in their argument, and more one-dimensional in their effect, than the original. Attempted replications of the *Travels* depart from their model not necessarily because of the writers’ shoddy craftsmanship compared to a master, but because the imitators are not, despite appearances, doing what Swift is doing. Parallels between the mechanistic eighteenth-century productions of “Gulliveriana” and present-day critical approaches to Swift’s original suggest that imitators and modern scholars share some simplistic assumptions about what Swift was doing. The imitators fail to replicate Swift’s satire, and the critics have been unable to agree on how to explain it.

The problem of reading Swift

A vast amount has been published on *Gulliver’s Travels*, but singularly little agreement has been reached about the nature of what Swift is trying to accomplish in that satire. If we are to try to avoid interminable and irresolvable controversy, then we need to ask why critical arguments remain so unsettled. What do Swift scholars assume about the individual features of his satire—about his irony, his targets, and his philosophy—and, ultimately, about what he is doing in the *Travels*? My aim is not to survey the entire field of Swift studies, but instead to look at the root causes of the long-standing critical impasse, causes common to a great many accounts of the *Travels*. The point, in other words, is to determine what demands are generally made of Swift’s satire, and how those demands have dictated the act of interpretation. To do so I will look at three types of suppositions that have shaped modern scholarship: assumptions about (1) the relationship between Gulliver and Swift, and thus about the reader’s ability to
decode the irony at work; (2) the clarity and certainty of the target; and (3) our ability to discover Swift’s position from the text itself.

(1) Swift vis-à-vis Gulliver. Critics agree that Swift uses his protagonist inconsistently; the degree to which he wants readers to endorse or reject Gulliver’s opinions varies wildly. Most scholars also suppose that the volatility present in the whole does not undermine our ability to know at any given moment how Gulliver is functioning. They sometimes assume that we can describe him in terms of a single, specific satiric role. Hermann J. Real and Heinz J. Vienken understand Gulliver in broadly symbolic ways, suggesting that Swift’s voyager—“of middling quality, neither good nor bad, both intellectually and morally ‘at the disposal of others’”—serves as “the embodiment of l’homme moyen, the allegorical representative of mankind.” The Travels, then, are “the memoirs of Mr. Everyman.” Swift may have intended his protagonist to typify humankind, but the text nowhere confirms or even encourages this reading. Another group of scholars, though not disposed to encapsulate Gulliver within a definite, exclusive satiric purpose, nevertheless argue that he is the connective that holds the Travels together. Ricardo Quintana has highlighted the centrality of Gulliver to Swift’s argument in the Travels: “It is what happens to Gulliver . . . and our reactions to Gulliver’s reactions which together constitute the main thrust of the satiric statement.” Gulliver is indisputably crucial to the satire, but his role as narrator hardly imposes order on that satire, or clarifies what (if anything) links the “points” being made in the four voyages. After all, as Hunter notes, Lemuel “is all over the place—sometimes a trustworthy

119 Real and Vienken, “The Structure of Gulliver’s Travels,” in Proceedings of The First Münster Symposium on Jonathan Swift, ed. Real and Vienken (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1985), 199-208, at 202. Denis Donoghue understands Gulliver’s function differently, but he too identifies an underlying, uniform meaning: Gulliver “is merely the sum of his attributes.” Donoghue’s Gulliver, like Real and Vienken’s, is Everyman; Swift’s contention, as this argument has it, is that no “man is more than the sum of a few attributes.” See The Practice of Reading (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 186.

reporter and commentator, sometimes a sophisticated ironist, sometimes an innocent or a fool or just a stick figure.”

Gulliver’s progression from country to country has been variously assessed. Everett Zimmerman sees the protagonist’s movement as toward “a vision that is gradually exposed not only as private but also as solipsistic.” Frank Boyle identifies increasing narcissism from the first to the last voyage, and Downie equates the course of the Travels with the process of “stripping man of his pretensions.” Denis Donoghue explains the four parts in terms not of development but of repetition. Gulliver is duped—“brainwashed”—everywhere he treks, and in the narrative as a whole, Swift seems to be implying that “if you send the human mind into the world without the benefit of Revelation, religious belief, and an innate conscience, it will succumb to every force it meets.” Most critics agree that Gulliver is increasingly short-sighted, and that in his final excursion he declines into dour misanthropy or madness.

The attempt to trace Gulliver’s development (or descent) has unsurprisingly amplified the efforts to explain Part IV. Scholars who agree about nothing else share the conviction that the last voyage is the satiric culmination and crux of the Travels; they presume that Part IV is of especial importance, in terms of interpretation, and that we can somehow extrapolate Swift’s position from Gulliver’s attitude at the end of Part IV. Devotees of the hard school read Gulliver as an extension of Swift, and promoters of the soft school consider him the prime target. These radically different readings are guided by the same supposition: whatever happens to the traveler along the way, the last trip is the one that most defines him. In a text so riddled with obfuscation, in which little or nothing can be taken for granted, the emphasis on Houyhnhnmeland seems not entirely defensible. To assume that Part IV is more important than the others

124 Donoghue, The Practice of Reading, 181, 184.  
in determining Swift’s satiric agenda, and that the irony can be confidently decoded, is perhaps to assume too much. For this reason, theories centered on Gulliver have not succeeded in illuminating the elusive center of the *Travels* or in establishing an indisputably “right” reading of Part IV. Gulliver appears in every book; Gulliver learns things; Gulliver makes mistakes in each of his voyages; Gulliver feels differently about humankind at the end of Part IV than he has elsewhere. Nevertheless, these details tell us virtually nothing—at least nothing probative—about Swift’s satiric argument. Perhaps the central traveler, for all his interest to the reader, is not the key that unlocks the *Travels*.

(2) Targets. If the *Travels* is a satire, what exactly is it a satire on? Many critics might be prepared to agree in general that it is a Menippean satire (whatever that means) but the label does not get us very far.126 Few critics would assert that a central, single, coherent argument exists in the *Travels*, but they argue as if they believe that one can be found. They acknowledge the difficulty of Swiftian satire and the multiplicity of Swift's targets, but that observation almost always precedes an endeavor to impose order on the text—an attempt, that is, to uncover Swift’s essential message in the *Travels*.

Where have critics discovered the underlying coherence of the *Travels*? Charles Firth put forward (1938) and Arthur E. Case further developed (1945) the thesis that the *Travels* is a sustained political allegory, a claim disputed by Phillip Harth (1976) and F. P. Lock (1980), and then subsequently defended by Irvin Ehrenpreis (1989).127 Lock has asserted that “the political purpose of *Gulliver’s Travels* was . . . not to attack not particular Whigs or Whig policies, nor even Whiggism, but the perennial disease of which Whiggery was only a contemporary manifestation.”128 Similar in kind to the allegorical reading is the analogical reading sponsored, for example, by Simon Varey and Downie. The latter

126 Weinbrot’s recent study restores utility to the concept of Menippean satire, but the term has generally been applied so broadly as to become meaningless. Bakhtin and Frye, Weinbrot points out, defined Menippean satire so loosely that it became “a baggy genre into which almost any work can be made to fit” (*Menippean Satire Reconsidered*, 15).


contends that Swift’s “method is one of analogy: reasoning from parallel cases. There is no need for him
to present a consistent allegory to score his political point.”

Other critics have been more specific in explicating a perceived central thrust of Swift’s satiric
argument. Charles A. Knight defines the text as “the great proto-nationalist satire on nationality.”
Clement Hawes asserts that, “The satiric effect of Gulliver’s Travels depends on Swift's ironizing, and,
above all, reversing of the commonplaces of eighteenth-century British colonial discourse.”
Donoghue, after rightly emphasizing the text’s elusiveness, finally pronounces that, “Gulliver’s Travels is
only superficially about big men and little men: it is really about entrapment.” Fabricant reaches a
similar conclusion, suggesting that the Travels is “a work explicitly and pervasively concerned with the
theme of confinement.” In Alan D. Chalmers’s interpretation, the governing anxiety of Swift’s work is
an “acute apprehension of the future.”

Boyle contends that, “The satiric charge is ultimately
straightforward. Individual narcissism . . . inevitably leads to moments when the frustration of the
narcissistic will detaches us from a sense of human sympathy.” However rich these diverse readings
are, they cannot all constitute the exclusive center of Swift’s satiric argument. My aim here is not to
summarize these positions exhaustively, but to capture the spirit behind them. I could cite more examples
from the massive corpus of Swift studies, but doing so would not make the argument more complete, only
repetitive. Though often quite good particularist readings, these interpretations are severely exaggerated
in claiming centrality vis-à-vis the text: they depend essentially on the assumptions and point of view of a
particular kind of reader.

129 Downie, “The Political Significance of Gulliver’s Travels,” in Swift and His Contexts, ed. John Irwin
Fischer, Hermann J. Real, and James Woolley (New York: AMS Press, 1989), 1-19, at 14. See also Varey,
“Exemplary History and the Political Satire of Gulliver’s Travels,” in The Genres of Gulliver’s Travels, ed. Frederik
130 Knight, The Literature of Satire, 68.
187-214, at 189.
132 Donoghue, The Practice of Reading, 182.
133 Fabricant, Swift’s Landscape, 46.
134 Chalmers, Jonathan Swift and the Burden of the Future (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1995),
15.
135 Boyle, Swift as Nemesis, 38.
While we can legitimately assume that Swift had a set of specific targets in mind, I see no textual grounds for supposing that the work’s many attacks necessarily add up to or are driven by a focused satiric argument. Few scholars have been content to say that Swift is striking multiple, even unconnected targets. Instead they look for an organizing principle behind the scattered shots that will encompass the majority, if not all, of the hits. These critics generally presume that Swift’s inconsistency and obfuscation is part of an attempt to encode a grand message; they suppose, that is, that he wants his satire to be decoded. Those features that cannot be fitted into the thesis provided are at least implicitly written off as Swiftian frivolity, as wanton amusement or as stock satiric images that are beside Swift’s “point,” or at least are comparatively minor concerns. Our ability to privilege any target or set of targets as primary seems dubious, however, and ranking the satire’s concerns seems a problematic critical maneuver. Some critics posit a central thrust sufficiently broad to contain the sundry hits—the Travels is about order and chaos, reason and unreason, truth and mendacity, and so on—but at what point do such overly general explanations become meaningless? Whatever else one might say about the Travels, it does not seem to be blandly general; it cannot be sufficiently “explained” as a satire meant to demonstrate human imperfections. A more serious problem is the common if often unspoken assumption that the Travels does have a definable “center.” The dogged search for a unifying “meaning,” while natural enough for students of satire, has produced much contention but little resolution. We cannot identify Swift’s central line of attack with confidence; can we any more confidently identify his final judgment on humanity?

(3) Authorial position. To what extent can we extrapolate Swift’s values from the text of Gulliver’s Travels? Scholars read the Travels not in isolation, of course, but with the aid of the entire Swift corpus: other works, correspondence, biography, and known allegiances inevitably affect interpretations of this particular satire. Equipped with such comprehensive contextual apparatus, students of Swift have usually read the Travels as a position-piece, a fictional expression of its author’s worldview. Scholars have concurred about some particulars of Swift’s satire, like Walpole as the Lilliputian treasurer Flimnap, but they have disagreed about the authorial position it conveys. Central to the critical dispute, as
Hunter notes, “is the pervasive and enduring question of Swift’s attitude toward human nature and human perfectibility.”

The debate about Swift’s view of humanity in the Travels has centered on Part IV. Hard school and soft school advocates read the finale in dissimilar ways, but these conflicting interpretations issue from a shared supposition about Swift’s satire: he means it to deliver a verdict. Dustin Griffin, inter alia, assumes that the Houyhnhnms represent “an ideal that cannot be attained,” but even those who believe that the Houyhnhnms perform a more complicated function nevertheless find in Part IV (and elsewhere) a clear judgment of Good and Bad. Irvin Ehrenpreis has suggested that, “According to Swift, human nature, impartially examined, shows itself to be radically vicious,” and Edward Rosenheim has likewise claimed that, “Swift’s attitude is, indeed, beyond despair—an icy compound of resignation and cynicism.” Rawson argues that from Part IV we can determine “not (of course) that Swift would enact the killing if he could, but that the Yahoos, like mankind in Genesis, deserve the punishment.” In Swift’s satire, Rawson contends, “the death-dealing curse . . . is extended to whole classes of men . . . and indeed to the human race itself.” Others have tempered this sort of reading, willing to read Swift’s verdict on humanity in less extreme terms. Explicitly or implicitly, critics in both camps have claimed that they are expounding what “Swift says.” But this is not really true. Gulliver’s Travels, whether we like the fact or not, is essentially opaque, and scholars tend to find in it what they are predisposed to find.

Most critics expect the Travels to communicate its author’s beliefs, and so they read with the goal of disentangling those beliefs from the mystifying irony and obfuscation in which they are embedded.

136 Hunter, “Gulliver’s Travels and the later writings,” 233.
137 Griffin, Satire, 61.
139 Rosenheim, Swift and the Satirist’s Art, 219.
The responsibility of the reader, in these interpretations, is tremendous. Hermann Real emphasizes this responsibility, arguing that

Even if it is true that Swift had a penchant for “personal anonymity [and] self-concealment” and even if it is true that ‘his own point of view is almost never overt,’ it is also true that as a satirist he never refused to teach. However, as a rule, his recommended alternative, his norms, are implicit; they are hidden and have to be inferred. In a sense, the reader’s time is employed in finding them out; in a sense, the reader has to teach himself.  

Similarly committed to reader application, Ehrenpreis even contended that, “By ignoring the particular allusions” in the *Travels*, we are “turning our backs on Swift himself. He hoped we would search out his meanings, and we owe it to him to do so.” The assumption behind these assessments, like the assumption behind the purported imitations and behind much Swift scholarship, is that the reader of the *Travels* can struggle toward resolution—armed, of course, with the necessary contextual information and ample staying power. If a hard-working reader should be able to deduce Swift’s meaning from the *Travels*, and if the individual efforts have generated so many incompatible readings, then we must wonder whether a single, right reading of the satirist’s position is to be had.

The scholars with whom I have been dealing all seem to presume that the act of reading can produce a clear determination of Swift’s satiric purpose in the *Travels*. This purpose is sometimes defined as moral didacticism. Ronald Paulson argued in 1967 that the various episodes of the *Travels* “serve as alternatives of action that suggest the direction that the reader should or should not take,” and Michael F. Suarez has recently contended that “the purpose of satire for Swift . . . is less the reformation of the target . . . and more about the moral education of the reader.” Suarez’s conclusion is reasonable, but if the text is instructive, then what is being taught, morally or otherwise? How much didactic intent

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143 Ehrenpreis, “The Allegory of *Gulliver’s Travels*,” 27. Downie is correct to suggest that Swift seems to have thought that “the inferior satirist, in spelling out his moral, connives with complacency,” but he argues as well that Swift “challenges the reader to interpret the signs” (*Jonathan Swift, Political Writer*, 273).
can we assume when the satirist/teacher is impossible to pin down, and what are the particulars of that education? The difficulty of discerning Swift’s moral position seems to be insuperable if proof is demanded.

Some scholars, of course, have concluded that the reader is ultimately unable to comprehend the *Travels* with complete confidence. These critics eschew a tidy resolution and deduce, as I do, that Swift does not mean to communicate a clear-cut argument. They have made this point, however, with noticeable unease, describing the interpretive problems of the *Travels* through theories of reader entrapment. The experience of reading the *Travels*, for these scholars, is an uncomfortable one—never mind the apparent fun that most readers have with the *Travels*, and the fun that Swift evidently had in writing it.¹⁴⁶ In John R. Clark’s discussion of what he dubs “the Swiftian Swindle,” he argues that *Gulliver’s Travels* not merely confounds but torments the reader, who “has been rocked and knocked and turned and overset,” and who, having “been conned into making what has to be described as a ‘bad trip’,” will not “want to thank Jonathan Swift for such coarse transportation.”¹⁴⁷ Because Swift’s text does not conform to its readers’ expectations, he concludes, those readers must inevitably feel harassed. Frederik N. Smith likewise judges that the reader “is challenged, and he is caught with no simple, unambiguously correct reading of the text. He cannot come off well. And his punishment—at least Swift hopes—will be a fresh awareness that he has failed as a reader.”¹⁴⁸ Rawson reckons this overt “aggressiveness towards the reader” to be distinctively Swiftian.¹⁴⁹ That Swift pitilessly exposes idiot readers, delighting in their

discomfiture, is not a new reading. In 1934 F. R. Leavis opined that Swift’s irony functions “to defeat habit, to intimidate and to demoralize.”

To assume that the elusiveness of the Travels can be explained by Swift’s desire to harass the reader is, I think, to oversimplify the range of his feelings toward the objects of his satire. His exposure of human limitations need not be taken as evidence of misanthropy, let alone sadism. The charge of aggressiveness on Swift’s part is, like the argument for coherence, another way of making sense of the text’s difficulty. It also points to a basic assumption shared by reader entrapment theorists and those, like Ehrenpreis and Real, who promote reader empowerment. Both groups believe that Swift’s satire should convey a particular message and provide some sort of clarity. An illustration of this common critical predisposition is Thomas Metscher’s study, which begins with a statement of what satire does: “Any type of satire implies (or explicitly presents) some kind of ideal norm.” He then identifies where and how Swift does that. This reading is governed by the critic’s assumptions about how the Travels should function. Such expectations, however common in acts of interpretation, cannot necessarily be fairly applied to reading Swift: this text does not do what many critics think satire should do.

Critics generally expect satirists to convey a discernible satiric agenda, and readers of satire are conditioned to look for (and either find or construct) an authorially announced and defined objective. Presented with a miscellany of numerous targets satirized in multifarious ways and with variable tone and intensity, students of satire tend to flounder, grasping for a tidy meaning that may just not be there. That Swift would write a puzzling, cluttered satire without a fixed point of attack is perhaps unsettling, but that seems to be what he has in mind with the Travels. A long line of scrupulous critics have sought the incontrovertible truth behind the text, and have found only partial interpretations. What can we safely presume about Swift’s primary “point” in the Travels? Very little. One credible explanation might be

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that Swift, gifted as he was, lost control of the text and did not give the necessary clues to interpret its central satiric argument, whatever he may have intended it to be. Another is that he deliberately constructed the indeterminacy as a way of tackling fundamental questions about human reason, in which case the response to the Travels is evidence of humanity’s desire—and inability—to answer such questions. A third is that he was having such fun attacking multiple targets that he did not much worry about consistency or resolution. Even these different suggestions do not exhaust the range of plausible speculation. That Swift has several agendas in the Travels is a real possibility, as is a variable level of commitment on Swift’s part to those manifold concerns. Such multiplicity limits our ability to delineate his satiric purposes, let alone to privilege any one as the sine qua non of his argument.

Swift does not communicate a clear-cut position; neither does he straightforwardly deprecate a defined set of targets. If he were doing either of these things the dissension among Swift scholars would surely not have arrived at a seemingly insuperable stalemate. If he were either heatedly or coldly disparaging humanity for its contemptible inadequacies, then I suspect that the overall experience of reading the Travels would be much more dispiriting than it is. Certainly if that were all he meant to suggest by the text’s indeterminacy then critics would have found little reason to carry on two hundred plus years of dispute. How do we deal with the indeterminacy of the Travels? Where do we go from here, short of throwing up our hands and conceding the futility of our efforts?

My goal is not to forestall further investigation of the Travels, just as it is not to belittle the many impressive and useful interpretations put forward by my predecessors. My aim is to encourage critics to reconsider the assumptions on which future inquiry might be founded. Students of satire are predisposed to make particular demands of the Travels, and, given the critical problems the Travels has caused, disentangling ourselves from those expectations seems a reasonable strategy. What to make of the multiplicity? Either Swift meant to convey a particular, coherent argument (but failed to provide the

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152 In “Swift’s Satire: Rules of the Game,” ELH 41 (1974): 413-28, Robert C. Elliott entertains a related possibility for a particular scene in Part III when “Gulliver expresses contempt for the Laputans, then immediately praises them warmly, we are confused, and not in an artistic way: I would say Swift here has momentarily lost his footing” (415).
necessary signals) or he did not (so that the search for one is necessarily unproductive). The latter need not be taken as a sign of the text’s meaninglessness or of Swift’s renunciation of human dignity. The difficulties posed by the *Travels* stem not from an absence but an excess of meaning. If anything, Swift seems to have had numerous points in mind, and to have been writing with several audiences in view, various sorts of readers who would read and respond differently. The interpretations that explain Swift’s satire according to a specific thesis are valid as partial explanations of a difficult text. Their sponsors’ failure to acknowledge the limited applicability of any single theory, however, inevitably leads to inflated claims that are often promptly challenged by proponents of other theories. Not all readers would or should have been thinking of or interested in Whiggery, confinement, colonization, nationalism, or any of one of the many “principal” targets critics have identified as defining the central thrust of the *Travels*.

One clearly conceivable effect of the *Travels* can be sheer bewilderment. Quite possibly Swift intended precisely that. He does not appear to be hiding a definite position in a mass of obfuscation and camouflage, and if this is true, then attempts to decode or otherwise to find coherence are misguided. His elusiveness, however, need not be construed as an oppressive reminder of humanity’s dismal incompetence. A critic committed to a right reading will come out with a hard or a soft school interpretation, but if we abandon the demands that have generally dictated analysis, we might arrive at a more complex and doubting reading of the sort I am suggesting. At the very least, if we relax the pressure placed on definitive explanation, and enjoy the uncertainties, we might find that the text works for us in a different fashion.

The *Travels* leaves us in an inexplicable tangle, but to say so is not to fault Swift for failure in communication, and neither is it a declaration of universal meaninglessness. The darkening tone of Part IV leads us to a disconcerting end that is provocative rather than conclusive; Swift propounds an unanswerable question and then exits gracefully, leaving us to contemplate Gulliver living “in great
Amity” with his two young stone-horses but beginning to permit his wife to sit at dinner with him.\(^{153}\) The ending resembles *Tristram Shandy*’s teasing finale, perhaps, more than—or at least as much as—a grim, determinate judgment on humanity. We can agree that war and the decrepitude of old age are ghastly and that human pride is preposterous, but beyond such particularities critical certitude is hard to validate. The disorientation that overwhelms a reader of the *Travels* need not evoke the “frightening nihilism” identified by Patrick Reilly and Eric Rothstein.\(^{154}\) We are to feel baffled but not necessarily despairing; we are to learn to live with doubt, not defeated but toughened by the experience. The work’s resistance to easy explanation need not be taken as evidence of the futility of human life or of human reading. Rather, the complexity of *Gulliver* seems to invite us to accept the impossibility of tidy certainties, and to adopt more realistic and flexible expectations for the ways in which we read—and live.

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*Gulliver’s Travels* has long been considered a foundational work in eighteenth-century satire, and scholars have used it and a small number of other major texts to generate their conclusions about satiric practice in the first half of the century. Its prominence is undeniable, but what it tells us about eighteenth-century concepts of satire is virtually nil. Borrowings from and imitations of the *Travels* are legion, but they are nothing like the original. Looking at the “Gulliveriana” should underline the radical atypicality, as well as the genius, of Swift’s satire: it is not even imitable, much less a generic model for the practice of the time. The ongoing critical wrangle over the *Travels* ought also to remind us that Swift’s satire does not do what present-day readers usually expect satire to do. Scholars have not found themselves in so fundamental disagreement about many satires, in this or any other period. The tendency of modern critics to understand the *Travels* as a defining exemplar of eighteenth-century satire is exactly wrong: it is intriguing, brilliant, and strange. Nothing else in Swift’s output looks quite like it; certainly none of


Pope’s satires comes close. Swift is an extraordinary satirist, among the most prolific of his lifetime; his satiric oeuvre shows tremendous range, and includes a number of deeply-felt, admirably forceful works. The notion that he “dominated” his age seems unnecessarily grand, and one can neither prove nor disprove such a claim (though I have my doubts). What is certain is the fact that the best-known satire of the most celebrated eighteenth-century satirist is an inspired singularity. Without precedent in the early eighteenth century, wholly inimitable by contemporaries, and confounding to modern critics, Gulliver’s Travels is a freak phenomenon in the history of satiric practice.

IV. Fielding and the move toward sympathetic satire

Most scholars take for granted Fielding’s connections and debts to Pope and Swift, casually regarding him as a “Scriblerian” wanna-be. Fielding’s disposition is quite different from Pope’s and Swift’s, a fact that has compelled critics to combine their assertions of Scriblerian influence with a disclaimer about tonal discrepancies. They tend to see him as Scriblerian with a difference—an awkward combination of Swiftian rage and Addisonian benevolence that leaves him torn between satire and sentiment, pessimism and optimism. His work reflects, in Hunter’s phrasing, “the perilous balance of values in a mind divided.”

In Paulson’s recent biography of Fielding (2000), he argues that the writer learned “almost everything about writing from the great trio of Pope, Swift, and Gay, together with their antagonists in the Spectator.” But Fielding does not say anywhere in his extant letters or writings that he sought inclusion in Pope’s circle, or even that he identified such a coterie; and, however familiar he may have been with the work of these writers, he does not appear to have been very directly influenced by them. If we do not assume that Fielding is a happy cross between Addison/Steele and the “Scriblerians,” then what sort of satirist do we find him to be? In this section I want to survey the various types of satire Fielding produces, and then to argue that his concept of satire shares remarkably little with his most famous contemporaries.

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155 Hunter, Occasional Form, 12.
In several works, Fielding’s primary goal is evidently to make his audience laugh: they may or may not be invited to feel superior, but they are being entertained. *Tom Thumb* is an enjoyable burlesque written with farcical gusto. The ridicule of Colley Cibber and others in *The Author’s Farce* has bite, but the play is basically a comic romp. *The Welsh Opera* (discussed above) seems likewise to possess little serious purpose, despite the desire of some critics to read political import into what is primarily a piece of drollery. *An Old Man taught Wisdom; or, the Virgin Unmask’d* (1735) is a slight ballad-farce, the substance of which is Old Goodwill’s attempt to marry off Lucy, his fifteen-year-old daughter. In a piece of singularly silly behavior, the ditsy ingénue accepts the offers of three of her five suitors (Blister, Coupee, and Quaver); while they puzzle over the mix-up, she ties the knot with someone else. Old Goodwill approves of the match, happily concurring that the chosen mate is a more attractive son-in-law than any of the “Booby Relations” with whom he had tried to pair her (2:33). Fielding’s ridicule of the competing would-be husbands is clear enough, but *An Old Man taught Wisdom* is a lightweight entertainment with scant satire. *The Lottery. A Farce* (1732), a high-spirited ballad opera afterpiece, is a more topical satire on the pleasure of the town named in the title—the annual lotteries Parliament approved in order to reduce the national debt. Fielding ridicules the avarice of speculators and stockjobbers associated with these lotteries, and he scoffs at the romantic hopes and unrealistic wishes of those who buy tickets. The satire in these plays is jokey, non-particularized banter written by a master of comic amusements for the stage.

Some of Fielding’s works are more substantial in satiric terms. Many of his satires provide a sharp critique, raise questions, and push readers and viewers to think, though works of this sort vary in acerbity and intensity. *The Tragedy of Tragedies* makes a more critical point than had *Tom Thumb*, expressing

*Provocation and preaching*

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Fielding’s “hatred of the pompous, the pedantic, and the grave.” Where *Tom Thumb* had been a general travesty, here Fielding goes after a number of specific exemplars among heroic plays (many of which were more than forty years old), including Dryden’s *Conquest of Granada, Don Sebastian, Aureng-Zebe*, and *The Indian Emperour*. He swipes at Dryden in particular (though he also targets plays by Lee, Banks, Thomson, Dennis, and others) and more broadly at false scholarship. A reader could have detected the bite in Fielding’s burlesque of the genre, its bombastic language, and instances of same from recognizable plays—though, as Hume points out, in performance *The Tragedy of Tragedies* would probably have come across a lot like its fluffier predecessor. Like *Tom Thumb*, this would likely have been taken by theatre-goers as “a travesty of heroic drama to be enjoyed for its sheer silliness.” In *The Covent-Garden Tragedy* (1732), Fielding returns to parody, this time not of heroic but of pseudo-classic tragedy. *Tom Thumb* is playful; *The Tragedy of Tragedies* is more substantial but mocks its target with zip; *The Covent-Garden Tragedy* is much less fun, a severely unsympathetic play that shows clear distaste for its subject. *Eurydice* (1737; pub. 1743) comprises social as well as cultural satire. Fielding sharply mocks the mores of London high-society, a world of domineering wives, henpecked husbands, and devotees of the imported culture he despises. No less than *The Covent-Garden Tragedy*, this piece reflects Fielding’s offended disapproval, this time directed at Italian opera and its consumers. Caustic tone notwithstanding, however, it is a more enjoyable play.

Fielding’s topical satiric plays often include clear socio-political criticism, varying in tone and intensity. *The Old Debauchees* (1732) combines farce with severe invective, the latter directed at the Catholic Church. Fielding’s plot features the depraved Father Martin’s attempt to seduce the world-wise Isabel, the daughter of Jourdain, one of the “old debauchees.” The Jesuit’s stratagem is aided by

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157 Hunter, *Occasional Form*, 23. “Hatred” seems an overstatement; I would suggest that Fielding’s feelings are closer to disdain or even amused annoyance than complete disgust.

158 Lockwood has a detailed discussion of Fielding’s allusions in *The Tragedy of Tragedies (Plays, Volume One*, 500-04).


160 Critics have usually identified Ambrose Philips’s *The Distrest Mother* (1712) as Fielding’s primary target, but few audience members are likely to have made that connection. See Peter Lewis, “Fielding’s *The Covent-Garden Tragedy* and Philips’s *The Distrest Mother*,” *Durham University Journal* n.s. 37 (1975): 33-46.
Jourdain’s guilty conscience, which leads him to do whatever Father Martin tells him to do. Far from being a helpless innocent, Isabel orchestrates the wicked Jesuit’s self-exposure before witnesses, and the play ends with his mortification. Fielding’s scathing abuse of the Catholic priests in this play is sincere—his loathing of the Church is well known—but his unremitting defamation is not terribly funny, and would have been palatable only to a committed anti-Catholic. The principal satiric object of *Rape upon Rape* (1730) is Justice Squeezum, a revoltingly corrupt villain. A number of critics have argued that Fielding was explicitly alluding to the rape case of Colonel Francis Charteris, notorious for raping his maidservant and getting off with a fine. Charteris was a friend of the ministry, and Opposition satirists held his case up as an egregious example of Walpolean improbity. *Rape upon Rape* indubitably alludes to Charteris, but, like *Don Quixote in England* (performed in 1734), this play is topical without being overtly partisan.

**Fielding’s more explicitly political plays are** *Pasquin* (1736), *The Historical Register, For the Year 1736* (1737), and *Eurydice Hiss’d* (1737). The first includes mock-rehearsals of two plays, *The Election* (satirizing the sleaziness and duplicity of both the Court and Country political factions) and *The Life and Death of Common-Sense* (“a stringent, oblique criticism of Walpole’s corruptive system”).

The anti-ministerial satire of *The Life and Death of Common-Sense* is very different from the frontal attack of *The Fall of Mortimer*; it has political bite without being a party document. *The Historical Register* attacks a long list of theatrical and political targets including Cibber, the ministry’s taxation policy, and high society’s nonsensical infatuation with the castrato “Farinello” (11). The play is plotless, consisting of a catalogue of ills. In the auction scene, Hen tries in vain to peddle unfashionable items:

“Lot. 2. a most delicate piece of Patriotism, Gentlemen, who bids?” he asks, but after dropping the price several times he gives up (16). Modesty, courage, wit, political conviction all meet the same fate; Hen cannot move “the Cardinal Virtues,” but for “a very considerable Quantity of Interest at Court” the

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participants are prepared to bid a fortune (18). Fielding’s satire is effective, at once biting and high-spirited.

_Eurydice Hiss’d_, an afterpiece to _The Historical Register_, is bolder. Fielding here associates Walpole with the a failed farce-writer named Pillage, and _Eurydice Hiss’d_ becomes an allegorical rendition of one of the Great Man’s most outstanding failures. Just as Fielding had been booed when he staged _Eurydice_ (an occasion recalled by the title of this new play), “so had Walpole and his ministers been soundly humiliated, both in the press and in Parliament, for trying to act out their little public farce known as the Excise Bill.”

_Eurydice Hiss’d_ is an example of Fielding’s skill at superimposing one target on another—a potent form of camouflage, in this case both glaringly obvious and unprovable. In this provocative afterpiece, Fielding increased hostilities, and the ministry was not amused. The Great Mogul was not long for the theatre, but these plays represent some of his most successful satiric ventures on stage.

Satires like _The Historical Register_ and _Eurydice Hiss’d_ are trenchant without being oppressive, their effectiveness greatly improved by Fielding’s restraint. In a small number of works, however, he abandons the indirection that works so well for him, and instead tells his audience explicitly and heavily-handedly what moral he is trying to deliver. The anti-ministerial satires of 1737 are hard-hitting but mitigated; a work like _The Modern Husband_ (discussed above) is infinitely harsher. Lord Richly and the Moderns are monsters, differing from the villains of _The Old Debauchees_, who are not perfidious rogues but pathetic wretches. Like _The Modern Husband_, _The Universal Gallant_ is shrill in its preachment. “Never before,” says Wilbur L. Cross, “had Fielding been so dull.”

The principal example of Fielding’s harsher social satire in fiction is of course _Amelia_ (1751).

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Distributive justice: Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones

Fielding’s works have been pretty well understood, and none have been so closely studied as Joseph Andrews (1742; 2 vols.; 6s†) and Tom Jones (1749; 4 vols.; 12s†)—but those novels have never really been regarded as part of the satiric culture of the mid-century. Individual critics have described parts of both novels as satirical, and recently Joseph F. Bartolomeo has included them in an account of eighteenth-century “Satiric Fiction,” but satire scholars have mostly not given much attention to these works in their surveys. Even Paulson, in his widely influential Satire and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England, has almost nothing to say about the way satire functions in these novels. He sets out to prove that “the novel” and “satire” represent two definitively and fundamentally different ventures: “The novel, as the name implies, represents new values, and satire, usually a conservative genre, represents old.”

Crucially important to the novel and to novelistic attitudes toward character, he argues, is the “growing acceptance of the assumption . . . that man is basically good” and “the belief in progress”—suppositions, says Paulson flatly, “with which the satirist could never agree.” As for Fielding, he is portrayed as an ambitious writer who begins as a satirist (“grasping the coattails” of Pope, Swift, and Gay”) and then—increasingly committed to the idea of positive values—gives up satire and writes Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones. This compartmentalization is misleading, badly distorting our sense of Fielding as a satirist and of satire in the second quarter of the eighteenth century. Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones are not “satires” but do include plenty of satire, and they represent a use of the “satiric” that is much milder than what we find, for example, in Fielding’s own caustic anti-Catholic satire, The Old Debauchees. It is also far removed from the practice of Pope, Swift, and Gay.

Joseph Andrews is always regarded as a comic epic-poem in prose, and Tom Jones as the cheery history of the eponymous foundling—but Fielding undeniably regards satire as a form of moral and social

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165 Paulson, Satire and the Novel, 3, 5, 52. The point about Fielding’s transition from satire to the novel is made at 99. Paulson devotes a lot of space to Fielding’s plays, reading them for their “Scriblerian” influence. In The Author’s Farce and Pasquin, he concludes a bit fancifully, “Fielding literally translated The Dunciad into the idiom of the stage” (52); he also looks for correspondences between Tom Thumb and the Dunciad (79).
instruction, and a significant part of *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* is education carried out by means of satire. That satire operates distributively: Fielding shows us positive and sometimes very negative examples. He affectionately mocks but ultimately rewards the mostly good, ridicules the less good, and punishes the truly depraved (e.g., Blifil).

Fielding is committed to the idea that a positive model can also be foolish, misguided, wrong, and inconsistent. Parson Adams, satirized as a man but not as a clergyman, epitomizes benevolence and charity. He is a well-intentioned rather than an effectual hero who tries instinctively but often injudiciously to do the right thing—“a Man of good Sense, good Parts, and good Nature,” but also “as entirely ignorant of the Ways of this World, as an Infant just entered into it could possibly be.” We are told that “Simplicity was his Characteristic,” and his innocent wholesomeness makes him the dupe of shrewder and lesser men.\(^{166}\) “Were it not for Fielding’s providential presence and insistence on tidy justice,” Hunter rightly observes, “Adams would not be able to cope at all with a world of motives that his goodness will not let him understand.”\(^ {167}\) Some scholars have been uncomfortable about Fielding’s decision to make such a manifestly decent man appear ridiculous, but the use of “mixed” characters is fundamental to Fielding’s satire.\(^ {168}\) He repeatedly presents us with scrupulous men of weak resolve or other limitations, with whom we are meant to sympathize and in whom we are meant to see ourselves. Discussing characters who “raise our Compassion rather than our Abhorrence,” Fielding says in *Tom Jones*:

> nothing can be of more moral Use than the Imperfections which are seen in Examples of this Kind; since such form a Kind of Surprize, more apt to affect and dwell upon our Minds, than the Faults of very vicious and wicked Persons. The Foibles and Vices of


\(^{167}\) Hunter, *Occasional Form*, 112.

\(^{168}\) Among the best studies of Fielding’s attitude toward Parson Adams is Simon Dickie, “Joseph Andrews and the Great Laughter Debate,” *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 34 (2004): 271-332. Dickie places Fielding’s presentation of Adams in the context of eighteenth-century debates about “the nature and ethics of laughter,” arguing that the portrait does not necessarily square with the novel’s prefatory claims or with Fielding’s other published statements about the treatment of the clergy: “As so often with Fielding, one finds that his imaginative treatments of ethical or religious questions are far less controlled than his journalistic pronouncements, his statements from the bench—or his prefaces and other *post-facto* declarations of how he was hoping to be read” (271, 323).
Men in whom there is a great Mixture of the Good, become more glaring Objects, from the Virtues which contrast them, and shew their Deformity; and when we find such Vices attended with their evil Consequence to our favourite Characters, we are not only taught to shun them for our own Sake, but to hate them for the Mischiefs they have already brought on those we love.  

Adams is such a character, virtuous but human.  His benevolence ought to inspire benevolence, and his mistakes ought to be recognized, assessed sympathetically rather than harshly, and if possible avoided.  His imperfections are no less vital to the satire than is our identification with him.  The failings of Tom Jones have been extensively commented upon, but he is not only decent and well-meaning (like Adams), but also educable.  His history is a progression; his enthusiasm for life and his essential humanity never diminish; his capacities for judgment improve; and his final good fortune is clearly to be applauded by the reader.  Even Tom’s more serious failings are of a wholly different sort from Blifil’s malevolence.  

Fielding understands the difficulty of behaving well.  In Amelia, he has the irresponsible, often thoughtless Booth cry in earnest, “Why can I not imitate what I so much admire?”  

Perfection is an impossible standard, and condemnation based on minor human failings is therefore unreasonable and even perverse.  Fielding’s main concern is educability, in his positive exemplars and in the readers for whose entertainment and edification they were created.  

Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones have been soundly explicated, but their place within the broader contexts of eighteenth-century satire has never been properly appreciated.  Fielding scholars understand these works’ incidental satire pretty well, but satire scholars tend not to worry much about novels, which represent what they consider an unconnected venture.  Literary histories invariably include chapters on “Augustan satire” and “the novel,” thereby erecting a large partition between sometimes interrelated enterprises.  This is not to deny that satire in novels tends to be very different from satire in verse, an

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issue to which I will return in the next chapter. The presence of plot and characters do usually temper or dilute the satire, and fictional works are often satiric but are rarely “satires.” That said, while a study of formal verse satire need not deal with prose of any sort, broader conclusions about “eighteenth-century satire” ought to take into account the various ways and places in which satire appeared. Satire scholars sometimes mention the novels of Fielding, Sterne, and Smollett, but their conclusions come entirely from the practice of Dryden, Pope, Swift, and a few other non-novelists. If Fielding has become a major figure in satire studies, he has done so thanks to the labors of those critics who assert his would-be Scriblerianism, pointing out his mild-mannered tolerance but insisting that in his heart of hearts he strove to emulate his “Augustan” betters. This mischaracterization is unfortunate. Adding Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones to our satiric pantheon naturally makes for a messier picture—but also for a much more balanced view of what satire meant in the mid-eighteenth century.

Fielding’s concept of satire

Scholars have long observed Fielding’s temperamental differences from the “Augustans,” but they have almost entirely failed to acknowledge the degree to which “temperament” matters, especially in satire. Critics tend to agree that Fielding “gives us a sense of human nature that, in its fullness and tolerance, we think of as Fieldingesque”—so says Brian McCrea, but a number of scholars have said similar things. Hunter’s description is as tender-hearted as the man he seeks to render. Fielding “is genial and pleasantly garrulous; he sees the humor in everything including himself; he loves life and savors its every moment; he is tolerant of others without compromising his strong beliefs; he is uncommonly decent and fair.” Fielding is not only light-hearted and optimistic, of course, as pieces like The Modern Husband and Amelia make clear. He can be unkind and unfair, and he is sometimes, as in the verse responses to Pope discussed below, angry and rude. The tone of his works ranges from frivolous to sunny to solemn to

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172 Hunter, Occasional Form, 3.
heavy-handedly severe. He has dark moments, and he features a few irredeemable characters—e.g., Lord Richly, the Moderns, Blifil—but for the most part his attitude toward the world and its inhabitants is positive. In 1918 Cross rightly observed that Fielding “rarely felt the saeva indignatio of a Swift or a Smollett,” asserting that he “had too few personal hatreds and he loved the world too much for that.”  

Fielding’s darker and more strident satires reflect his amiable tolerance as much as do his more lightweight, sympathetic works: if he had enjoyed rubbishing the human race, or even just its worst specimens, he would have been much better at it than he was. The condemnation of Lord Richly is unpleasant and unsuccessful because Fielding cannot rant with Pope’s confident solemnity and cannot rage with the same intoxicating fury that fuels Swift’s libels. Swift can be playful, low-key, charmingly intimate and personal, as in his birthday poems to Stella, but much of the time he is an angry man. Swift can hate; Pope can despise; Gay can conclude that the world is all alike without losing his edge. Fielding, A. E. Dyson long ago observed, lacks “sufficient indignation for satire,” and “is not misanthropic enough to carry off the disgust which he sometimes pretends to feel.”  

Eighteenth-century satire is not inherently and invariably misanthropic, but Dyson is right to underscore Fielding’s inability to express genuine hatred. How often does Fielding successfully convey anger? When he tries to do so, as in The Modern Husband, it comes across as stiff and contrived. No doubt he feels indignation sincerely, but his displays of outrage are not always convincing. Though capable of a degree of contempt, he cannot exult in it. If the writer does not take pleasure in the uninhibited expression of malice, the odds are high that the reader will likewise find little to enjoy. Such is the case with Fielding. When he loses restraint, he has no fun and neither do we.

Fielding is a pragmatic moralist, and his spectacular range as a writer has much to do with his sense, in Hunter’s phrase, of “didactic efficacy”: different targets and situations require different techniques and levels of intensity. He believes that satire can do some good, but only if it is used with

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175 Hunter, Occasional Form, 85.
care. In the dedication to *Tom Jones*, he observes that, “it is much easier to make good Men wise, than to make bad Men good” (1:8). The statement has serious implications for satire. To rebuke the morally reprehensible who do not want to improve is pointless; to rail at those who do want to be better is futile, inhumane, and unjust. Fielding recognizes that, for those sinners who can be reformed, guilt is a stronger instrument than shame. He is closer to Defoe, in satiric terms, than to Pope or Swift, though he is much less earnest than Defoe.

Fielding has a *joie de vivre* that neither Pope nor Swift seems to possess. After his death, Lady Mary reflected that “no Man enjoy’d life more than he did,” describing her cousin as a devil-may-care chap enraptured of food and drink, women, gambling, good fellowship, any and every thing in life. Fielding is capable of sobriety and unhappiness and spitefulness, but he is essentially a pretty cheerful person. Swift has a sense of humor, but a least as a satirist he almost always tends toward fiery hot, and his humor stings; Pope is assuredly judgmental; Fielding has a great deal more zest and joy and good fun. Those high spirits, in satiric terms, are the product in part of his considerable tolerance for human frailty. His “optimistic drift,” John Richetti observes, is that “modern disorder is really a form of comic recurrence; what else can you expect from human nature?”

Anyone who lacks a fair amount of patience for inevitable human foibles is likely only to be depressed and discontented, with him- or herself and with the whole world. How much tolerance have Pope and Swift for things that depart from their standards? Very little—which is what gives to their satire such force. Fielding knows that young men are going to sow their wild oats; he knows that people are going to be silly or vain or spiteful. He is prepared to mock such failings, but he is not greatly troubled by them. Of more extreme forms of dishonesty, he is

176 As Henry Knight Miller explains, Fielding “more than once declared that those who were inherently evil or who had been corrupted by a vicious education could not change; and, giving up on these social monsters, he addressed his exhortations rather to ‘the innocent and undesigning,’ either to inculcate some degree of suspicion and caution in their dealing with mankind or to place in a true light the thoughtless follies and crimes of which even good men were sometimes capable.” See his Introduction to *Miscellanies by Henry Fielding, Esq; Volume One* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), xxxvii.


not at all tolerant. Fielding hardly imagines that all is for the best in this best of all possible worlds, but he tends to believe that goodness and decency have at least a chance for a fair reward.

Fielding’s use of mixed characters, those neither blameless nor wholly evil, has to do with a crucially important theme of his work—and one that matters to his concept of satire. He encourages his readers to refrain from passing judgment too early or too rigidly.\textsuperscript{179} The “Man of Candour, and of true Understanding,” he observes in \textit{Tom Jones}, “is never hasty to condemn” (1:329). As critics have uniformly acknowledged, Fielding seeks to improve his readers’ capacities for reading and judging.\textsuperscript{180} We should base our opinions on motives, but often have access only to actions, and for that reason we must train ourselves to judge with sensitivity and caution. Otherwise we risk rendering judgment, after the fashion of Thwackum, that is sterile and punitive. We must take care, too, because—as Fielding insists in different ways throughout his career—in all but truly evil human beings, “Vice with Virtue, Faults with Graces mix.”\textsuperscript{181} The union of moral strengths and moral failings makes judgment exceedingly complicated, as the narrator of \textit{A Journey from This World to the Next} learns on his travels. The people he meets, even Julian the Apostate, “contain such a Mixture of Good and Evil, that it would have puzzled me which to choose.”\textsuperscript{182} Fielding is certainly eager to warn readers about the need for sympathetic prudence, but that is not his only purpose. Relentlessly self-conscious about his art, Fielding is also concerned about authorial obligation: the writer, especially if he is in the business of judging, must write with a sharp awareness of the complexities of actual human behavior.

For Fielding, satiric judgment needs to be reasonable and potentially useful. He defines his satiric method in direct contradistinction to that of those who—whether dealing with an individual or

\textsuperscript{179} Fielding’s reader, as Patrick Reilly observes, must not “be simply well-meaning,” but also “judicious, able to emancipate the inner truth from the surface appearance”; the reader must recognize that man “may be far better than his actual deeds.” See “Fielding’s Magisterial Art,” in \textit{Henry Fielding: Justice Observed}, ed. K. G. Simpson (London: Vision Press, 1985), 75-100, at 77.

\textsuperscript{180} Nicholas Hudson, for example, has highlighted “the tremendous consistency with which Fielding focuses on failures of discernment as the primary source of danger in the world.” See “Fielding and the ‘Sagacious Reader’: A Response to Lothar Cerny,” \textit{Connotations} 3 (1993): 79-84, at 80.

\textsuperscript{181} “To John Hayes, Esq.,” in \textit{Miscellanies . . . Volume One}, 52 (at l. 18).

society—“pass a severe Sentence upon the whole, merely on account of some vicious Part.”

On this basis, he disapproves of generalized satire, arguing in An Essay on Conversation (1743) that “such general Satire is not founded on Truth.” The “Opinion of our Superiority is commonly very erroneous,” he continues, because “we are apt to over-rate our own Perfections, and undervalue the Qualifications of our Neighbours.” This tendency leads us to “set too high an Esteem” on minor details, and to think that those particulars represent “a more essential Difference between us than they really do.” Fielding is a realist, and one with some sympathy for some of his targets and a sense of humor.

Is this theory of satire “like” Pope’s or Swift’s? The answer is definitely No. Fielding’s concept and practice of satire is radically different from Swift’s and Gay’s, but the clearest example of the contrast between Fielding and his “Scriblerian” forebears is Pope. In verses written in 1729 but first printed by Isobel M. Grundy in 1972, Fielding chastises “Codrus” (Pope), the “Lilliputian Bard” who writes out of “Ignorance and Malice.” From Fielding’s point of view, the author of The Dunciad typifies the “sour, morose, ill-natured, censorious Sanctity” that he later criticizes in An Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men (1743). Someone who writes from such a position, Fielding explains, “never is, nor can be sincere,” and his judgment “will neither do Good itself, nor suffer others to do it.”

The poet of The Dunciad decries what he finds repulsive without offering much in the way of explicit positive values, angering and alienating his targets. Fielding believes, on the contrary, that “proper” satire cannot be disconnected from the society of readers for whom it is written. Was he any happier with Pope’s Horatian satires? Probably not, judging from “An Epistle to Mr Lyttleton” (1733), also printed by Grundy, which is the only evidence we have of Fielding’s thoughts on the subject. In the “Epistle” he holds forth on the nature and proper purposes of satire, and he excoriates Pope: “Go on,” the poet

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183 Tom Jones, 2:570. In “To John Hayes, Esq.,” the poet chastises Codrus, “Who nothing knows of Humankind, but Ill,” and who, having looked no further than a single deed, rashly concludes that “each Man is corrupt at Heart” (Miscellanies . . . Volume One, p. 51; ll. 4, 6). The “Great Artist,” however, “diff’ring Passions joins”—he attends, in other words, to the intricate realities of human deeds and motives (p. 52; l. 33).
184 An Essay on Conversation, in Miscellanies . . . Volume One, 147, 138, 140.
185 Grundy, “New Verse by Henry Fielding,” PMLA 87 (1972): 213-45, at 234 (canto 2; ll. 190, 238) and 236 (canto 3; l. 49).
186 An Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men, in Miscellanies . . . Volume One, 168, 169.
encourages the malevolent satirist, “enjoy the Triumphs of thy Spite, / And curse thy Self, and curse the
World, and write” (p. 245; ll. 158-59). The poem’s closing image depicts Pope as a “little Curr” barking
at all passersby, overwhelmed by self-loathing, unprovoked by those he attacks, and as impotent as he is
unkind (l. 166). Fielding may be loyally taking up the cudgel on behalf of Lady Mary here, but he is not
cringingly reverential of Pope, and the attitude he expresses towards satire is consistent with his later
views on its legitimate functions.

If we approach Fielding without trying to make him into a would-be “Scriblerian,” we find him to
be an experimentalist who takes great pride in his originality, and a rather cheerful writer—at least until
Amelia, whose somber rendition of squalor and injustice reflects its author’s darkening outlook. Fielding is a realistic optimist capable of flat condemnation but essentially compassionate, and he
produces tempered satire—drastically remote from the satiric practice of his most renowned
contemporaries, but not without considerable currency in this period, celebrated “heyday” of harsh satire
though it is now considered.

Sympathetic satire

The period between the publication of Gulliver’s Travels and that of Pope’s last Dunciad is almost always
regarded as the high moment in punitive satire. Modern critics have tended to valorize the combative
satirists of the 1730s, those who ruthlessly abuse Walpole and his dunces and those who describe politico-
cultural collapse with marked cynicism or despair. But not all satires from this period are punitive.
Fielding is only the most famous practitioner of an increasingly prominent mode of sympathetic satire,
which features not denunciation or ridicule but sympathetic critique. This is not the same as exemplary

cannot exceed the length of 512 characters.

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187 The bleakness of Amelia has been much commented on, as have the disparities between it and his earlier
novels. In Amelia, says Rawson, “humane understanding” often “gives way to human incomprehension,” and
Fielding communicates “a sense that cruelties of circumstance, the general indecorum of things, is of an order of
painfulness quite different from that normally exhibited in Fielding’s work.” See “Fielding’s style,” in The
172. For a full-dress study of Fielding’s entire late career—placing Amelia and other late writings in the context of
his service as a magistrate—see Lance Bertelsen, Henry Fielding at Work: Magistrate, Businessman, Writer (New
York: Palgrave, 2000).
satire, which provides positive models meant to represent ideals for readers/viewers. It involves the amiable and generous representation of those characters who are not paragons but “real” human beings, complete with foibles and flaws.

Sympathetic satire is less common in verse than in other forms, but this period is not without poetic exemplars. The author of *Human Passions: A Satyr* (1726; 6d) deals at some length with the human propensity toward passion rather than reason and about the discontent to which this imbalance leads. This “satire on man” is far from harshly judgmental. The satirist clearly differentiates between exceptional misconduct and more ordinary, harmless folly—this is not the breezy nihilism of Gay’s “the World is all alike”—but toward the less grave failings he is sympathetic. He does not sharply distinguish himself from his targets; the “pursuit of false Content” is universal, and he is suffering alongside the rest of his fellows (2). He registers human affliction not with scorn or despair but with sympathy, somberly bidding his readers to “mark what various Ways has Fate to vex / Poor Mortals, and their best laid Schemes perplex” (5). James Miller’s *Seasonable Reproof, A Satire, In the Manner of Horace* (1735; 1s) is likewise sympathetic. Although he attacks such individuals as Henry Carey and Aaron Hill with real indignation, on humanity more generally he waxes compassionate: “We all our Frailties share” (19). In *Manners Decypher’d* (1739; 1s), a response to Whitehead’s *Manners*, James Meredith vehemently censures that satirist for his unfair anti-ministerial railing. He objects not only to Whitehead but to the fundamental nature of satire he is practicing, arguing that Whitehead cannot pass judgment so assuredly when the ways of men are beyond human comprehension.

Can you the Springs of Government unwind?  
Trace all the Lab’rinths of the Human Mind?  
The dark Recesses of the Heart pervade?  
Pronounce when Men by Principle are sway’d  
And when they act a Part in Masquerade?  
If in th’ Affirmative you make Reply,  
All Men of Reason flatly say, You lie. (9)

Meredith’s understanding of satire assumes the difficulty of discerning human motives—and, like Fielding, he warns against judging too quickly or too confidently. “SATIRE” ought not just to “sting,” but should be positive, showing man “Both what he is, and what he ought to be” (10). Meredith is, of course,
responding to a particularly offensive satire, but his advocacy of more sophisticated and realistic critique also represents an increasingly conspicuous satiric mode.

Sympathetic satire is much more effective when readers or viewers are presented with characters, “real” individuals living and trafficking in the world. That this type of satire is more common in drama and fiction than in verse is no surprise. I have already discussed *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, the best fictional examples in this mode. Drama has remained almost entirely outside the purview of satire scholars, so that a high proportion of the more positive satiric enterprises in the eighteenth century have been disregarded. As Matthew J. Kinservik has conclusively demonstrated, however, the pejorative definition of satire applies rather badly to many of the popular plays of this century. 188

*The Beggar’s Opera* was only one of two great theatrical successes of 1728—the other was *The Provok’d Husband*, Cibber’s completion of Vanbrugh’s *A Journey to London*. Like Vanbrugh’s *The Provok’d Wife*, *The Provok’d Husband* is a vivid illustration of marital discord, this time between a decent husband and a wayward wife. Lady Townly is sexually chaste but reckless and spendthrift, described in the dramatis personae as “Immoderate in her Pursuits of Pleasures” (3:184). 189 Aggrieved by her excesses, Lord Townly laments in the play’s opening lines: “Why did I marry?—Was it not evident, my plain, rational Scheme of Life was impracticable, with a Woman of so different a way of Thinking?” (3:185). His well-meant pleas for her better behavior come to naught: nothing can persuade her to change. Exasperated by her incorrigibility, he finally settles on legal separation (“This House you sleep no more in!” [3:250]) and she tearfully vows reformation, at which point he promptly offers forgiveness and they commence their happily-ever-after. As Lady Townly must accept “The Husband’s Right to Rule,” so (in the second plot) Lady Grace must accommodate to Mr. Manly’s “Doctrine” of marriage or let him find someone who will (3:252, 192). The final message of the play is, as Hume concludes, “a

188 Kinservik, *Disciplining Satire*, 13. Kinservik’s study is refreshing in its eschewal of the common critical rigidity surrounding satire. The principal playwrights with whom he is concerned are Fielding, Foote, and Macklin, but he also discusses sympathetic satire in Cibber, Centlivre, Farquhar, Miller, and Garrick (and others, but these are the primary examples of satirists active in the first half of the century).
189 All references to *The Provok’d Husband* are to *The Complete Works of Sir John Vanbrugh*, ed. Dobrée and Webb, vol. 3.
very conservative statement about the proper nature of marriage—an obnoxious one by present-day standards. ‘Let Husbands govern: Gentle Wives obey.’ . . . Thus Cibber’s response to disharmony is to assert a traditional solution: submission to duly constituted authority.”

The Provok’d Husband includes some sharp satire—as on the country “gentry” in the Lady Wronghead plot—but the play is mostly positive, a “blend of laughing satire and sympathetic identification.” In sharp contradistinction to Love’s Last Shift, the emphasis is on seriously presented reform. Even the seemingly intractable Lady Townly at last becomes her better self, and Cibber’s play makes good on the principle advocated in his prologue: “Plays should let you see / Not only, What you Are, but Ought to be” (183). This is not a platitudinous expression of human goodness. It is an admission of human imperfection, a representation of misbehavior that is critical without being unsympathetic.

A number of dramatic satirists in this period adopt sympathetic stances. An adaptation of Molière, Miller’s The Man of Taste (1735) is a London comedy of a distinctly humane sort. Miller mocks the pretensions of those who aspire to social high life; he critiques the manners of the fashionable society and laments the absence of decency in the “polite” world. His exposure of folly and vanity, he maintains, is “confin’d within the Bounds of a modest and wholesome Chastisement” (dedication). The tone is light. Maria (played by Kitty Clive) and her cousin Dorothea are “Both setting up for People of Taste and Politeness” (dramatis personae). When Maria’s father insists that the two girls start hunting husbands, Dorothea checks him: “For Heavn’s Sake, Sir, suffer us to breathe a little amongst the Beau Monde. We are but just got here: but on the Border only of Taste and Politeness yet, and don’t knock it all on the head at once” (8). Miller’s “Satire,” as he insists in the epilogue, is ultimately benevolent, meant

190 Hume, Rakish Stage, 201. The quotation is at 3:254.
191 Kinservik, Disciplining Satire, 168.
192 Says Hume of Miller’s play and other “humane” social comedies: their “essence is a view of the characters as part of a group. The viewpoint—the fundamental ideology—of Carolean comedy is that of the individual making a necessary accommodation to the society in which he must live. The fundamental ideology and viewpoint of eighteenth-century social comedy is that of the honnête homme in harmony with his society. There are, to be sure, preachy moral comedies in the seventeenth century, and rakish figures in eighteenth-century comedies, but there is a basic shift of values. The change is gradual and hard to pin down, but Loftis is surely correct in seeing the 1730s as the swing point in a basic change in the values and stereotypes of comedy” (Rakish Stage, 310-11).
to help and edify. The object is to strip people of their delusions, social and otherwise, rather than to punish. The author “begs, Whoever knows a Fool, / Or Brute, or Fop, She-Tyrant, or He-Mule, / They’ll, in pure Pity, bring ’em here to School” (86, 87; italics reversed).

Dodsley’s *The King and the Miller of Mansfield* (1737) is more strongly sentimental and moralizing. The play begins with King Henry II lost in Sherwood Forest, having been separated from his courtiers; he is given shelter by honest John Cockle, the eponymous miller. Meanwhile, the miller’s son (Richard) and his former sweetheart (Peggy) fantasize about exposing the king’s iniquitous courtier, Lurewell, who wrongly persuaded Peggy of her lover’s infidelity so that he could win her for himself. When the king arrives incognito at the miller’s house, he learns of Lurewell’s villainy and resolves to punish the miscreant and help the young lovers. At the end of the play, he and the miller’s family meet with the courtiers—among whom, by chance, is Lurewell. The king reveals his true identity, and the resolution is a happy piece of distributive justice. The beneficent monarch bestows a knighthood on the upstanding John Cockle (with a handsome sum attached), Lurewell is reprimanded and forced to pay Peggy £300 per annum (45), Richard forgives all, and the euphoric lovebirds reunite. The center of the play, however, is the king himself, who rejects the code in which aristocratic privilege negates the need for charity. When he metes out punishment to the offending courtier, he insists that Lurewell’s title does not license inhumanity: “My Lord, you see how low the greatest Nobleman may be reduced by ungenerous Actions” (45). Dodsley shows us wickedness punished and goodwill rewarded. *The King and the Miller of Mansfield* is an overtly didactic play, advocating social morality that applies to people of all ranks.

A more complicated example is Hogarth’s *A Rake’s Progress* (1735), a sequence of engravings serving up an intricate mixture of punitive and sympathetic satire. The rake is Tom Rakewell, a young innocent who aspires to social standing beyond his means and meets with a bad end. Rakewell, Jenny Uglov argues, “is no Lovelace, no dashing blade, conquering fashion, decoying women and terrorizing the town with nonchalant, demonic arrogance. He is a young bourgeois, first seen as a trembling youth with a fresh face haloed in curls, attractive, open, innocent—and weak.” Tom is less a rake than a would-
be rake, “not because his money runs out but because at every stage he is also shown as a man of feeling, who rails against fate and descends into madness.” The “progress” portrays Tom living beyond his means, impregnating the ingenuous Sarah Young and then abandoning her, being arrested for debt, buying his release by marrying a wealthy woman whose fortune he soon exhausts, finally imprisoned and then sent to Bedlam. His fellow captives remain “great in their own mad minds,” but Tom “lies naked on the floor, stripped of clothes and reason.” The bandage on his breast suggests attempted suicide, and his despair is evident. And yet—says Uglow—“he remains a man, rousing human emotions: Sarah still loves him; the surgeon looks down with pity; even the turnkey shows compassion as he loosens the manacle on his bony leg.”

* A Rake’s Progress * is hardly an uncritical representation of Tom, but it is a morally instructive picture of a sort of human weakness to which most of us may be presumed susceptible. Hogarth’s notion of satiric didacticism is more complex than Fielding’s, often though the two are coupled. Fielding explains in the preface to *Joseph Andrews* that, “The only Source of the true Ridiculous (as it appears to me) is Affectation,” and both he and Hogarth (says Paulson) “are concerned with those ordinary people who act according to inappropriate ideas of themselves.” But, Paulson continues, the two satirists have very distinct opinions about punishment for misbehavior: “The most important difference between Fielding and Hogarth is in the matter of rigorous consequences: Hogarth’s Tom Jones would have died of tertiary syphilis or at the very least suffered a clap.” This distinction is right, and vitally important.

195. Frédéric Ogée has recently offered a reconsideration of “the nature and similarities and differences” between Hogarth’s and Fielding’s “ways of seeing, or forms of looking.” He admits correspondences among their works, but denies the utility of stressing a connection between Hogarth and Fielding: “A comparative survey . . . reveals that, while Hogarth was indeed addressing the disturbing issues at stake in the representation of the ‘modern moral subject,’ Fielding was . . . trying to breathe new life into the ‘ancient moral subject.’” See “‘O, Hogarth, had I thy Pencil’: Delineations of an Alleged Friendship,” in *Henry Fielding (1707-1754): Novelist, Playwright, Journalist, Magistrate*, ed. Claude Rawson (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008), 201-29, at 201, 227.
Fielding forgives and rewards his fallible protagonist; he exposes his villains, but he is not pitiless in subjecting even Blifil or the Moderns in *The Modern Husband* to vindictive punishment.

**V. Alive and well: the state of satire at mid-century**

Satiric practice in the first half of the eighteenth century—from the publication of *Tale of a Tub* to the deaths of Pope and Swift—is far from uniform. The most exciting developments of the first quarter of the century do not continue into the later twenties and thirties; the most interesting satires of the second quarter of the century cannot be organized into the categories described in chapter 5. The 1730s are not the 1710s—the entire culture of satire undergoes a radical transformation, whose causes are not wholly clear but whose importance is not to be underestimated. The great successes at the beginning of this period (*Gulliver’s Travels*, *The Beggar’s Opera*, and *The Dunciad*) appear without warning and could not have been anticipated by readers in 1725, but they do not constitute or usher in a new mode of satire. Pope, Swift, and Gay are friends who go after some of the same targets, but their satiric outputs have little in common. Their practice is neither representative of a “type” nor a particularly useful guide to what goes on in this period.

Scholars have tended to generalize about satiric practice in the long eighteenth century on the basis of a very small number of examples, and all such works not called *Absalom and Achitophel* come from the 1726-1745 period. The period from the late twenties through the early forties is universally touted as the heyday of whatever we mean by “Augustan” satire, and Augustan satire is almost without exception understood as a largely negative enterprise. Antiquated as Louis I. Bredvold’s 1949 “Gloom of the Tory Satirists” now seems, his description of the satiric temperament remains standard in its essentials. He asserts of the Augustan satirist that, “The darkness of his gloom is the measure of the depth of his indignation, and a sense of isolation is inevitable in his calling.”

To what extent do gloom, indignation, and isolation characterize the practice of satire in this period? Some satirists are indeed

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gloomy and some indignant, but a great many have a jolly good time. Gloom, moreover, does not equal indignation. Incriminatory derogation of a much-reviled minister is not the same thing as all-inclusive pessimism about a world gone to pot. Privileging content over tone is misguided. Thematic comparisons can be valuable, but in terms of satiric practice, the utility of a category that includes both *The Dunciad* and *The Tragedy of Tragedies* is functionally nil.

A great deal of non-harsh, non-indignant satire is written by non-gloomy, non-isolated satirists in this period. Satire scholars who lionize Pope and Swift also tend (unsurprisingly) to focus on angry, destructive, and punitive satire—but satire moves in two very different directions in the second quarter of the eighteenth century. This is at once a great age of harshly abusive and cynical political satire, and a period of transition toward increasingly sympathetic and humane satire. Fielding represents not a watered-down version of the former, but a firm believer in the latter. He hardly thinks that universal darkness is about to cover all: he understands the potentiality for evil, but also for good. Swift pays relatively little attention to the good in his satires. Pope is sometimes convincingly positive, as in the Martha Blount passages in *To a Lady* and in various bits of the *Epistle to Arbuthnot*. The apostrophes to virtue and the virtuous throughout the Moral Essays represent “good,” though many of the positives come across at least to this reader as formulaic, abstract, and impersonal. At bottom Pope remains a profoundly judgmental writer, drawing hard lines between what is acceptable and what is not. I have a very hard time imagining either Pope or Swift indulging in the kind of amused and affectionate ridicule of a positive example we find in Fielding’s handling of Parson Adams. Where in their satiric careers do they exhibit compassion or tolerance? *The Rape of the Lock* is light in tone, but the lightness is more a matter of performance of burlesque than in the presentation of Belinda, who, though not sharply criticized, is not sympathetic. Readers are not asked or expected to relate to her. Swift does some affectionate personal joking, but neither in his nor in Pope’s satiric oeuvre do we see much “mixed” satire.

Fielding represents a move toward the kind of satire described by Stuart M. Tave in *The Amiable Humorist* (1960), a shift from judgmental to compassionate laughter. Attitudes toward human nature are changing by the middle of the eighteenth century, and Fielding’s comic didacticism is much more in line
with the directions in which satire is moving. He is no wishy-washy would-be Swift—by the Dean’s standards, Fielding is a mighty soft touch. He believes that the object of satire is to reclaim or at least to improve a flawed character, and that the audience can learn from watching that example. Neither Pope nor Swift would give us a Parson Adams or a Tom Jones, and this is no mere technical differentiation. The distinction between “harsh” and “sympathetic” satire is fundamental, indicative of two strongly contrasting views of human nature and attitudes toward the operation of satire.

Again and again we have found that satire is a highly time-specific form, not only in its targets but in its dominant modes and patterns, and this period is no exception. The destructive energies directed at the Walpole ministry are undeniable, as are the anxious grumblings about cultural decline, but they are closely tied to a particular moment in the eighteenth century. The satires long taken as exemplary of eighteenth-century practice actually represent a short-lived phenomenon. Harsh cultural satires—no less than Carolean court lampoons, generalized verses denouncing abstractions, monitory satires in the reign of Queen Anne—are the product of a particular moment. The second quarter of the century is neither representative of the whole century nor the evolutionary culmination of what precedes it. The thrill of the satiric culture of the late 1720s and 1730s is that it is largely unrepresentative—unprecedented and unforeseen, and, as we will see, with precious little carryover into the second half of the eighteenth century.
Chapter 7
Churchill, Foote, Macklin, Garrick, Smollett, Sterne, and Others: 1745-1770

“The first half of the eighteenth century concluded the Augustan Age—the great age—of English satire. But in the same decade that saw the death of Swift and Pope, the novel . . . began to produce a series of masterpieces that contributed importantly to the eclipse of satire for the greater part of the next one hundred and fifty years.” (Ronald Paulson)

That the golden age of satire ended with the deaths of Pope and Swift is a well-established critical truism. Not for nothing does Thomas Lockwood explain his enterprise in Post-Augustan Satire (1979) as “something in the way of an autopsy.” In The Amiable Humorist (1960), Stuart M. Tave argued for a marked transition, over the course of the century, from harsh to affectionately sympathetic laughter. Counterexamples can be cited, and the change is gradual, hazy, and incomplete, but it is also indisputable. As we move into the second half of the eighteenth century, good nature and benevolence are increasingly celebrated, while severity in judgment is increasingly scorned. Such circumstances are not propitious for a satirist moved by Swiftian indignation, and scholars have in the main been content to accept Paulson’s conclusion that satire qua satire does not really survive the deaths of its most famous practitioners. The principal exception is Charles Churchill, who has been well-studied by Lockwood and Lance Bertelsen. Smollett is often cited as a quasi-satiric writer of this period (and Paulson’s readings of his major novels are excellent); some critics tentatively dub Tristram Shandy “satirical.” But because later eighteenth-century satire is so remote from what scholars tend to privilege, the attention it gets is usually tepid and dismissive. The one true satirist of this period has been dealt with carefully and thoroughly—what more need be said about an otherwise moribund genre?

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The presence of this chapter is in itself a denial of the accepted wisdom about satire in the third quarter of the century. Obviously I do not believe that satire “dies” in the mid-1740s, and neither do I agree with Paulson that the energies of “real” satire are transformed beyond recognition and subsumed by a fundamentally distinct genre. The tendency at least implicitly to define satire as that which Pope and Swift practice is a bad idea. If we decide, as Alan S. Fisher does, that, “All true satirists are pessimists; satiric urgency is a sense they give that the world is exceedingly ugly and vicious, and that nothing is likely to change it,” then the great age of satire includes precious few satirists. If we begin from the presumption that satire is what the Dean writes, then the form does in fact die with him. In point of fact, hundreds of works are called satires by their authors in the third quarter of the eighteenth century; contemporaries routinely describe Samuel Foote’s on-stage personations as satire, some appreciatively and some disapprovingly; Charles Macklin’s *The Man of the World* was refused a license on two separate occasions (1770 and 1779) for its trenchant political satire before a heavily revised version was finally staged in 1781. The primary material does not bear out the modern critical notion that satire was somehow *in extremis* by the mid-century.

My organization in this chapter is basically generic, because the shifts in satiric practice differ from genre to genre. The ways in which verse satire changes are not the ways in which dramatic satire changes, and satire in fiction is something else again. I begin with poetry. In the opening section, I survey the largely undistinguished types of verse satire (with some speculation as to what changes and why), including the non-political satire of Charles Churchill. Section II focuses on the political situation of the early 1760s, and in particular on John Wilkes, *The North Briton*, and Churchill’s Wilkesite poetry. Section III surveys the most common types of dramatic satire, produced for a commercial theatre (by David Garrick and others) and driven as much by well-tried popular formulas as by authorial conviction or deeply-felt moral indignation. I also cover Macklin and Foote, from a modern vantage point the two most important satiric playwrights of this quarter century, and Garrick, the period’s most eminent

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theatrical personality. Section IV covers satire in fiction, in particular in the works of Smollett, Henry Fielding, Sterne, Charlotte Lennox, Oliver Goldsmith, and Sarah Fielding. These writers evidently understood their enterprises as satirical (if not as “satires”), though they are far from uniform in their practice. I will say at the outset that the object of this multi-genre survey is to challenge the standard cliché about the dearth, let alone the death, of satire in the third quarter of the eighteenth century.

Satire neither dies nor disappears in the later eighteenth century—it fragments. In the periods covered in the previous survey chapters, extrinsic circumstances either made some kinds of satire impossible (as in chapter 4) or provided focal points for satirists (chapters 3, 5, and 6). Carolean satirists are preoccupied with political issues and court figures; many satires in the reign of Queen Anne have to do with debates about political power and religious toleration; in the 1730s, most satirists target Walpole, the Opposition, hack writers, and/or a variety of cultural forms. Especially in chapters 3 and 6, we saw a fair amount of connection between genres. Satiric playwrights and poets during the Exclusion Crisis and during the 1730s produce related (though not identical) enterprises. There is very little generic overlap in the second half of the eighteenth century, in part because of censorship imposed by the Licensing Act of 1737.5 Poets and cartoonists blast Bute’s ministry, but hard-hitting political commentary could be kept off the stage. For a variety of reasons, including but not limited to censorship and changing attitudes toward laughter, we do not find conspicuous focal points for satire like the ones we saw in earlier chapters. In practice, what this means is that satire appears in many forms and deals with many subjects, and no one target or technique is particularly prominent. Satiric practice is much more polyvalent and pluralistic than what we have previously encountered; there are no obvious groupings, in terms of theme and content, technique, or motive. The culture of satire in this period is, as the chapter title suggests, rich but scattered and disconnected.

I. The rise of “poetic” satire

Insofar as critics have discussed verse satire in this period, Churchill is usually the first and last name mentioned. He is undoubtedly the foremost satiric poet in the generation after Pope’s death, but in fact a substantial amount of satiric poetry is produced in this quarter century. I have read some two hundred separate pieces of various lengths plus a number of single-author collections (e.g., by Lennox, Mary Leapor, Robert Lloyd) and miscellanies (e.g., *The Theatre of Wit* [1746]). For a variety of reasons, most of these works are unimportant and dispiriting. As Lockwood wryly acknowledges at the beginning of *Post-Augustan Satire*, these poems just are not very good. I have no intention of plodding through hundreds of examples of fairly straightforward and largely uninteresting pieces; what I want to do is characterize the predominant types of satire that were published in these years.

By way of generalization, I suggest that part of the insipidity of these works has to do with the fact they are evidently intended principally as works of art. Some are simply *jeux d’esprit*, but a high percentage of this material is self-consciously and self-indulgently poetic. They are written for the appreciation of their style as much as or more than for their content. The authors of these works are not writing satires but poems, and—granting the brilliance of the canonical masterpieces—trying first and foremost to craft a piece of art tends to produce radically different results from attempting to offer serious commentary on something that one thinks matters. I will return to this subject at the end of the section, but the survey of satiric poetry ought to be read with this basic fact in mind. I have organized the poems into three very loose groupings: (1) lightweight, frivolous entertainment pieces, usually containing insubstantial social satire, more descriptive than judgmental; (2) socio-ethical preachment, including complaints about political venality, mostly generalized and made from a distinctly moral perspective; and (3) particularized satire and more focused attacks, whether political, social, or literary in subject.

*Frivolity and entertainment*

Many satires in this period make no pretense to moral judgment: they are divertissements, bouncy narratives (sanitized versions of Ned Ward) or playful depictions of social scenes and characters. The
subtitle of *The Important Trifters* (1748; 1s) underscores the piece’s teasing nature: “*a Satire: set forth In a Journal of Pastime A-la mode, among Young-People of Fashion, in the Spring-Season of the Year. and Address’d, as a Trifle, to the Polite Ladies in Town, and to the Beau-Monde in General.*” In a verse “journal,” the poet explains his comings and goings among the court and high society, effectively demonstrating (*sans* explicit commentary on) the frivolity of the world in which he traffics. He is a cheerful participant in this pointless life: “At *Breakfast* sometimes we to *Ranelagh* go, / And find Fault, as usual, with—more than We know” (11). The pastimes of the high society are exposed as senseless and hollow, and the principal types (the wit, the beau, the coquet) all seem duly silly, but the breezy diary contains not the faintest hint of moral reproach.6 Satirical entertainment pieces of this sort tend to be emphatically insubstantial. In the preface to *Garrick’s Vagary: or, England Run Mad* (1769), the author justly describes his poem as “a miscellaneous Production,” intended to serve the public as “a laughable *What d’ye call it, some Thing or other*” (Preface).7

Other satirical diversions are more actively good-natured, including Christopher Anstey’s extremely popular *New Bath Guide* (1766), a manifestly warm, temperate, and featherlight social satire (also a very expensive one at 5s†). Anstey’s work comprises a series of verse letters written by members of the Blunderhead family during their visit to Bath, describing the manners and fashions of the English spa town. The letter-writers record with enthusiasm the pleasures of the resort, which is a place of “*Fine Balls, and fine Concerts, fine Buildings, and Springs, / Fine Walks, and fine Views, and a Thousand fine Things*” (43). In a letter to his mother, Simkin Blunderhead marvels at his visit to “a Place where the Ladies undress”:

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6. A prose exemplar of this generalized social satire is *Ranelagh House: A Satire In Prose: In the Manner of Monsieur Le Sage* (1747; 6d), which the ESTC attributes to the clergyman Joseph Warton. The speaker satirizes love of gaming (8) and of foreign things (11-12); false patriotism (12-13); mercenary marriage (16-17); critics and wits (19-20); and a variety of other foibles and follies.

7. The subject of *The Bath Comedians* (1753) is also largely theatrical, and this work is just as playfully insubstantial as *Garrick’s Vagary*. A more generalized social satire, lightweight and non-judgmental, is Edmund Hoyle’s *The Polite Gamester: or, the Humours of Whist. A Dramatic Satire* (London edn., 1753; 6d). More miscellaneous satires include *The Yorkshire Medley* (1763; 1s) and *The Court and City Medley* (1764), which are pure frivolity; the latter includes poems called “*The Murdered Apple-Tree*” and “*Dying Groans of a Devonshire Cyder-Mill.*”
Oh ’twas pretty to see them all put on their Flannels,
And then take the Water like so many Spaniels,
And tho’ all the while it grew hotter and hotter,
They swam, just as if they were hunting an Otter;
’Twas a glorious Sight to behold the Fair Sex
All wading with Gentlemen up to their Necks. (37, 38)

Anstey’s send-up of Bath living is genial—Howard D. Weinbrot calls attention to its “amiable satiric flaccidity”—and representative of the kind of limpness that critics have pointed to as evidence of satire’s demise. This kind of “wholesome Satyr” (Anstey’s phrase; p. 7) is admittedly less interesting than pointed lampoonery or sharp critique, but it is not less satirical. *New Bath Guide* is the best example of a type of satire alive and well in this quarter century; it was widely read and hugely popular (its influence on *Humphry Clinker* is often cited). The satire is good-natured, though it is not of a piece with (say) the heartier tempered satire of Henry Fielding, which is tolerant but also vigorously didactic. Fielding is trying, among other things, to teach his readers a lesson about judgment; Anstey is content to be amusing.

*Moral preachment*

The authors of the lightweight social satires do not even feign moral indignation, but the majority of the non-particularized verse satires in this period do at least claim moral purpose. Many of these works are fairly focused theme-satires. Common targets are court/political corruption (e.g., *Bribery A Satire* [1750] and John Robinson’s *Preferment: A Satire* [1765]), women of fashion (e.g., *Advice to the Ladies. A*  

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9 Several plaintive satires in this quarter century consist of generalized grousing about political venality—a popular subject for satirists throughout the century. These satires vary in intensity, tone, form, etc., but they are sufficiently straightforward, and represent a common enough phenomenon, that I do not think space given to analysis here would be well-spent. Examples include *The Umpire: being a Serio-Comi-Critical Dissection Of Three Learned and Important Dissertations On the Nature of Englishmen and Scots* (1747), *The Monosyllable If! A Satire* (1748), Thomas Gilbert’s *A Satire on All Parties: A Poem* (1749), Richard Owen Cambridge’s *A Dialogue between a Member of Parliament and His Servant* (1752; 1s†), *The British Worthies: or, Characters of the Age. A Panegyrico-Satirical Poem* (1758; 3d), and *The Minister of State, A Satire* (1762; 1s 6d†). Of these, the most interesting is probably the last, which—like Charles Forman’s *Protesilaus* (1730), discussed in chapter 6—depicts a rotten minister in ways definitely meant to apply to Walpole. A comparison between intensity of the two is some illustration of the shift away from the harsher tone of 1730s political complaint: Forman’s is blistering, this one only grumpy.
Satyr; Dress. A Satire; and Female Taste: A Satire [all 1754]), and modern taste and manners (e.g.,
William Kenrick’s The Town. A Satire [1748]; Taste. A Satire [1753]; and The Trifler. A Satire [1767]).

From a pulpit, these poets issue sober moral pronouncements. The author of Advice to the Ladies,
lamenting the softer sex’s infatuation with make-up, cries that, “belles, by native genius taught to please, / Correct their Maker’s want of taste with ease” (16). In The Town, Kenrick grumbles that, “All seek intent for what is new To-day, / And Noise and Nonsense bear them all away” (4). Works such as The School of Man (1753; 3s†), The Devil upon Crutches in England, or Night Scenes in London (1755; 1s 6d†), and Folly, A Satire on the Times (1763?; 2s) are more comprehensive in their social critique. The authenticity of the indignation expressed is impossible to determine, but clearly these authors conceive of satire as something that ought at least nominally to ridicule generalized vice and folly.

The claim that the satirist is society’s custodian and moral scourge represents what P. K. Elkin describes as the “core” of the standard eighteenth-century “defense of satire.” In 1973, Elkin argued that this apologia was a widespread phenomenon, part of the “orthodox viewpoint” of the eighteenth-century defenders of satire: satirist after satirist in the long “Augustan” period loudly asserted his noble intentions, maintaining that he told the hard truth because, as disinterested guardian of virtue, he had no choice.10 In fact, defensiveness of this sort, though not totally unknown, is relatively infrequent until the second quarter of the eighteenth century. Carolean lampoonists, entertainers like Ward, and the satirical propagandists of the 1710s evidently felt little need to apologize for their offerings. Dryden’s Discourse is a much-celebrated piece of satire theory, but it does not represent the mood or the practice of the 1690s or any other decade in the long eighteenth century. Pope, Young, and others make high-flown claims for their satire in the late twenties and thirties, but such moral assurances are most conspicuous in the 1740s and 1750s.

Mid-century satirists have much to say about why they feel they must write satire. Smollett’s Advice (1746; 1s) and Reproof (1747; 1s) are largely the stuff of Juvenalian indignation, and in them he is

concerned not only to lash individuals and deprecate a rotten society, but also to consider “the question of how the satirist should conduct himself in an unreceptive, largely unworthy world.” The subject of both works, Lockwood concludes, “is not ‘the world’ but ‘the-satirist-and-the-world,’ or perhaps ‘the satirist-versus-the-world.’” The author of *Plain Truth: A Satire* (1747) opens in grand defensive manner: “Yes, I will write. And let them laugh who will, / ’Tis Honour, Virtue, guides the honest Quill” (3). He proceeds to mock the female sex, their male counterparts, and a host of named politicians. He ends just as high-handedly as he began, asserting that his wish is to “humanise Mankind,” and to “poise the World aright” (23, 24). Both *Modern Virtue: A Satire* (1746) and Charles O’Brien’s *A Dialogue between the Poet and his Friend. A Satire* (1755) consist of conversations in which a well-meaning companion counsels the satirist to hold his tongue. The poet of *Modern Virtue* scorns his friend’s warning: “My Verse, you say, will certainly offend. / Who? not the Man whom Virtue calls her Friend” (21). The subject of these poems is the satiric impulse and enterprise, the poet’s role in the epic battle between Virtue and Vice.

The low-heat surveys of social ills, like the satires about satire, tend to read more like performances of preachment than like expressions of actual indignation, especially alongside their higher-heat counterparts. (Among the works just mentioned, Smollett’s satires are exceptions: in *Advice* and *Reproof*, as elsewhere, he damns with passion.) As I said in chapter 3 with regard to Oldham’s rants, we cannot always distinguish with certitude between genuine and performed righteous anger, but differences in intensity—and in sermonic vehemence versus recitation of defensive boilerplate—are fairly easy to detect. John Taperell’s *Swearing. A Satire* (1751; 6d) is a heavy-handed condemnation of the titular sin. He says ominously to the swearer, “You are already in the Suburbs of Hell, learning the infernal Language, sending out your Oaths like Arrows against Heaven, which will rebound and bring double

12 Another example is *Past and Present, or, Times Compared: A Satire* (1746; 1s). Innumerable satirists include (in some fashion) the standard *apologia*. See, for example, Stephen Barrett’s *War, an Epic-Satyr* (1747), *London: A Satire* (Portsmouth: 1751), *On the Abuse of Poetry. A Satire* (1752?), and *The Age of Dullness. A Satire* (1757).
Vengeance on the Heads of those that shot them.” (iv). The verse itself is just as filled with fire and brimstone: “You guilty plead, the dreadful Sentence past, / And you for ever into Hell are cast” (9). Swearing is a decidedly homiletic satire, almost certainly meant to deter Taperell’s fallible fellow Christians rather than to reform hardened blasphemers.\(^\text{13}\)

**Particularized attack**

Most of the comprehensive, social survey satires include incidental swipes and topical allusions, but the number of verse satirists in this period whose principal object is to convey judgment on a person or a group of people is strikingly small. The major exception is Churchill, of whose political satires I will say more in the next section. Most of the verse in this period consists of diverting trifles and generalized moral preachment; only a fraction of the total output is centrally concerned to denigrate particular people.

Much of the satirical commentary on individuals involves actors and writers. The most notorious example is Churchill’s *The Rosciad* (1761; 1s 6d†), in which a group of named players vie for the coveted chair of the just-deceased Roscius. The succession of players—a standard satiric gimmick—allows Churchill to offer mocking commentary on a variety of people in turn before having Garrick named the victor. The snapshot characterizations of Macklin, James Quin, Spranger Barry and others provide what slight narrative the poem has. A year earlier, Robert Lloyd had offered an anatomy of on-stage infelicities in *The Actor. A Poetical Epistle to Bonnell Thornton*—cracking, for example, that “none emphatic can that Actor call, / Who lays an equal emphasis on all” (10)—but Churchill’s satire was personal enough that it generated a paper war.\(^\text{14}\) Wounded, Arthur Murphy responded with his *Ode to the*

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\(^\text{13}\) The author of *London: A Satire* (Portsmouth: 1751) attacks impiety more broadly, also from an emphatically Christian point of view: in a denunciation of gamblers, he laments that, “The cards and dice their week-day’s sport afford, / And cards and dice still solemnize the Lord” (7). Other moralistic “satires on man” include John Slade’s *The Transmigrating Soul; or, an Epitome of Human Nature. A Moral Satire* (1760; 3s†), George Canning’s *Horace’s First Satire Modernized* (1762; 1s), Bennet Allen’s “To Mankind,” printed in his *Satirical Trifles* (1764; 1s), and John Potter’s sometimes venomous *The Hobby-Horse: A Characteristical Satire on The Times* (1766; 1s).

Naiads of Fleet-Ditch (1761), indignantly charging Churchill with plagiarism and lambasting his comrades, Lloyd, George Colman, and William Shirley.\(^{15}\) Churchill met outrage with outrage, redoubling his attack on Murphy in later editions of The Rosciad.\(^{16}\) Both men and several others are chided by the anonymous author of The Scrubs of Parnassus: or, All in the Wrong (1761; 1s 6d†). The satirist depicts “Churchillo” in the mad business of composing The Rosciad ("fun and spite inspir’d his brain" [8]), and represents the subsequent war as the dirty play of malicious men:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Now flew the mud about like fury,}
\text{And authors swore like brims of Drury;}
\text{Some here and there with dirt did faddle,}
\text{Others with excrement did paddle;}
\text{And splashing, dashing, dibbling, dabbling,}
\text{Were almost choaked with squibbling squabbling;}
\text{Till bawling, squalling, railing hissing,}
\text{They fell to spewing, sh----g, p-----g. (28)}
\end{align*}
\]

The satire might well spring from deeply-felt disapprobation, but it might just as easily be an attempt to capitalize on a highly visible public squabble.\(^{17}\)

Literary in-fighting is ubiquitous in this period: the vast majority of the topical satires involve self-contained warfare between individual writers and players. The satirical journalism of the Nonsense Club members well illustrates the vogue for this sort of mockery. Bertelsen’s coverage of the group is thorough and his analysis sharp.\(^{18}\) He focuses at some length on Bonnell Thornton’s periodical Have At You All: or, The Drury-Lane Journal (16 January to 9 April 1752), which burlesqued several periodical writers including Johnson and Smollett but most roundly derided Fielding’s “Sir Alexander Drawcansir.” The Drury-Lane Journal, Bertelsen concludes, “made no pretence of being a ‘real’ periodical. . . .

includes a list of satires in which “may be traced the influence of The Rosciad” (168). Bertelsen has an excellent discussion of the reaction to The Rosciad in The Nonsense Club, pp. 78-90.

\(^{15}\) For a discussion of the Ode, see Robert Donald Spector, Arthur Murphy (Boston: Twayne, 1979), 52-53.

\(^{16}\) Churchill continued to add to The Rosciad in subsequent editions, increasing its length and satiric impact, as in the ridicule of Murphy. See Raymond J. Smith, Charles Churchill (Boston: Twayne, 1977), 28-30. Murphy was also satirized by the author of The Murphiad (1761).

\(^{17}\) Other disapproving responses to The Rosciad include The Churchiliad: or, a few Modest Questions proposed to the Reverend Author of the Rosciad (a prose piece of 1761; 1s 6d) and An Epistle to the Author of the Rosciad and the Apology (1761). Churchill’s friend Lloyd defended him—and his right to ridicule—in An Epistle to C. Churchill, Author of the Rosciad (1761): “No toothless Spleen, no venom’d Critic’s aim, / Shall rob thee, CHURCHILL, of thy proper Fame” (3).

\(^{18}\) See especially chaps. 2 and 3 of The Nonsense Club for the literary/theatrical/journalistic satire.
Thornton’s mission, purely and simply, was to ridicule and absurdly imitate the works of others.”

With the *Covent-Garden Journal*, Fielding had “provoked a literary free-for-all by declaring . . . war on all of Grub Street and particularly on John Hill.”

Thornton’s *Journal* belongs to this battle. So does Kenrick’s *Fun: A Parodi-tragi-comical Satire* (1752; 1s), a silly, plotless piece targeting Fielding and Hill. *Fun* is mockingly irreverent and obscene, an attempt to join in a well-known paper war.

A more personal satire on Hill is Christopher Smart’s *The Hilliad* (1753; 2s†), written after Hill criticized Smart’s *Poems*. In a vivacious Dunciad-style mock-epic, Smart mocks his enemy as the arch-Dunce Hillario, whose “cavalcade” includes “Pert Petulance,” “drowsy Dulness,” “neutral Nonsense,” “spiteful Enmity,” and so on. “Such was the groupe—they bow’d and they ador’d, / And hail’d Hillario for their sovereign lord” (ll. 79, 80, 81, 83, 88, 92-93). The deflation no doubt stung—Hill retorted with *The Smartiad*—but Smart himself seems to be having a great deal of fun. Murphy’s (?) *The Spouter* (not performed; pub. 1756) is meaner and more comprehensive, though often quite funny. The satirist complains about the vanity of the leading actors and the need to pander to audience tastes; he derides theatrical personalities such as Cibber and John Rich; and scorches Hill and especially Foote with venom. This sort of cultural caterwauling is conspicuous. Levels of intensity and motives differ—the satire can be a matter of personal rivalry, gratuitous abuse, self-defense, expression of jealousy, a desire for publicity, or whatever—but the bickering of writers, critics, and actors accounts for most of the personal satire in this quarter century.

The rise in satire on players in particular probably owes something to the beginnings of a celebrity culture; increasing newspaper publicity means readers more receptive to and interested in satiric commentary on recognizable cultural icons.

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21 On Kenrick, and on this “war” more generally, see Bertelsen, *Henry Fielding at Work*, 100-03.

22 Other prominent examples are Garrick’s attack on Thaddeus Fitzpatrick and his quarrel with Kenrick (discussed below) and Smollett’s antagonism toward Sterne and John Shebbeare. See also Hugh Kelly’s *Thespis: or A Critical Examination into the Merits of the Principal Performers belonging to Drury-Lane Theatre* (1766), which drew sharply critical replies, including *Anti-Thespis* and *The Kellyad: or a Critical Examination into the Merits of Thespis* (both 1767).
The rest of the particularized verse satire in this period is exceedingly miscellaneous. The author of *A Letter from a Gentleman in London, to his Friend in Pensylvania; with a Satire; containing Some Characteristical Strokes upon the Manners and Principles of the Quakers* (1756; 6d) is solemn in his denunciation of the Quakers in general and William Penn in particular. He scorns their vain presumption that, “To them alone, the Favourites of Heav’n; / This happy Inspiration first was giv’n,” and hotly berates them as a group of fools and villains, hypocritical and bigoted (12). A handful of satires target Kitty Fisher, a prominent English courtesan and aspiring actress notorious for her string of liaisons with wealthy men. *Kitty’s Stream: or, the Noblemen turned Fisher-Men. A Comic Satire* (1759) depicts the promiscuous courtesan as a “pamper’d Strumpet” and suggests that she is not worth her price (9).

Edward Thompson’s *The Meretriciad* (1761; 2s) gripes about loose women more broadly, including Kitty as an outstanding example: “Fisher thou’rt young,—but in the rolls of fame,” he asks, “Who can, or dare eclipse a Kitty’s name?” (10). Few of the topical satires of this quarter century are stingingly personal or high heat.

**Poeticized satire**

What topical thrust this verse has is often obscured by overt poeticizing, as in Lloyd’s *The Progress of Envy* (1751; 1s). The subject of the poem is William Lauder’s effort to prove that Milton plagiarized large passages in *Paradise Lost* from several sources. In the preface Lauder is described as a “SON OF DARKNESS” maliciously trying “to disturb, if possible, the Ashes of our Poet” (vi, vii). The poem proper begins with Envy seeking whom she may despoil: “Ah! luckless Imp is he, whose Worth elate, / Forces him pay this heavy Tax for being great” (1). The scene shifts to “an ancient Mount, yclept Parnass,”

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23 Thompson’s *The Temple of Venus. A gentle Satire on the Times* (1763; part 1, 1s; part 2, 1s 6d) is an even more heavy-handed satire on the same theme; the opening lines get right to the point: “WHORES, and the Dame I sing, who first inspires / The thrilling Virgin with unhallow’d fires” (1).

24 “In London Lauder began a series of articles in the Gentleman's Magazine (January–August 1747) devoted to proving by means of parallel quotations that Milton’s great epic was largely plagiarized from Jacobus Masenius (*Sarcotis*, 1654), Hugo Grotius (*Adamus exsul*), Andrew Ramsay (*Poemata sacra*), and others” (Paul Baines, *ODNB*).
where Milton “sings” among the other sanctified poets (2, 3). Into this arcadia Envy slinks, prepared to lay waste to the happiness of worthy men with the aid of Malice and Lauder.

Impatient ENVY, thro’ the aetherial Waste,
With inward Venom fraught, and deadly Spite,
Unto this Cavern steer’d her panting Haste,
Enshrouded in a darksome Veil of Night.
Her inmost Heart burnt with impetuous Ire,
And fell Destruction sparkled in her Look. (9)

Having cast gloom upon the edenic Parnassian scene (i.e., having ruined Milton’s reputation), Envy retreats in a black chariot “drawn by Dragons dire” and by double-tongued serpents (12). In the end, of course, Parnassus is restored (“new Flowers sprong,” etc.), and deserved Fame triumphs over Envy and Lauder (15, 16). The use of Spenserian stanzas and the rich personification, as Lockwood observes, reduces Lauder to a very minor role in this poem: “The intended victim . . . is completely swallowed up in the picture of Envy’s progress; or to put it another way, the pictorial qualities of the allegory obscure its meaning.”

The satiric thrust is clear enough if one is looking for it—Lauder is motivated by spiteful envy, and his malevolent schemes cannot succeed in detracting from Milton’s greatness—but the punitive force of The Progress of Envy is essentially nil.

Lloyd’s poetry illustrates the categorical literariness of much of the verse satire in this quarter century. With the exception of the scrappy, lightweight “trifles” and a few plainspoken Juvenalian denunciations, a staggering amount of this material “sounds,” tonally and stylistically, much the same. In New-Market, A Satire (1751; £2 s.), Thomas Warton describes the imprudent life of a wastrel heir, whose inheritance of a fortune immediately turns him into a spendthrift adept in the art of “fashionable shame” (4). The satire is light—versus gaming, promiscuity, horse-racing, etc.—but the language and tone are

25 Lockwood, Post-Augustan Satire, 79-80.
26 A similar example is the anonymous Progress of Lying. A Satire (1762; 1s), which, though obviously a satire on deception, is not forceful denunciation but high-flown poetic allegory. See also Liberty Deposed, or the Western Election. A Satirical Poem, In Three Books (1768; 1s 6d), an allegory in which liberty is ousted by corruption. The preface explains that, especially in the last book, “the author has made his action allegorical, by omitting the names of the voters, and substituting instead thereof the passions by which each of them was chiefly swayed” (ii). A lot of “topical” satires have their focuses to some extent obscured by ostentatious poeticizing, including The Quack Doctors. A Satire (1762), James Scott’s Every Man the Architect of his own Fortune: or the Art of Rising in the Church. A Satyre (1763), The Jumble: A Satire (1763), A Poem on Satire (1764), and The Demagogue (1766).
grand. Social excess becomes a threat to British stability, and the coxcomb’s madness is offered as a warning to his generation: “Ye rival Youths, your golden hopes how vain, / Your dreams of thousands on the lifted plain!” (8) The satiric target is lost amid the ostentatious poetic allegory:

    How are th’ advent’rers of the British race,
    Chang’d from the chosen chiefs of ancient days;
    Who warm’d with genuine glory’s honest thirst,
    Divinely labour’d in the Pythian dust. (15)

The epic language is not the stuff of deflationary mock-heroic; Warton’s elevated tone is not part of the joke (much of this verse has little sense of humor). Lockwood points out, moreover, that New-Market includes quite a lot of visual detail that “has little or nothing to do with the poem as satire. . . . This kind of description is ‘pure’ in the sense that it seems to have no moral implications.”

That Warton is exposing social folly is manifest, but “New-Market” seems more a poetic subject than a satiric target.

In this quarter century, verse satire increasingly becomes art—a largely, though not entirely, unprecedented phenomenon in the long eighteenth century. For the overwhelming majority of the satirists covered in chapters 3 through 6, the central object usually appears to be something other than creating poetry. They produce satire for the joy of defamation, or they do so to entertain their friends, to defend something in which they believe, to agitate for change, to complain—but with relatively few exceptions, the satiric argument is of crucial importance. The likes of Young and Pope are indisputably keen to compose fine verse to be appreciated by present and future readers for its craft, but this kind of elaborately “poetic” satire does not become predominant until the mid-century. I do not for a moment deny the greatness of Absalom and Achitophel or the brilliance of A Modest Proposal, but Dryden and Swift seem to me primarily concerned with achieving an effect and making a point. The question is not whether a satire has literary merit, or even whether its author has literary aspirations, but what the principal impulse behind composition seems to be. Dryden exercises his talents in the service of a cause; he is not using the Exclusion Crisis as material for a poetic masterpiece. I will return to this vexed issue in my epilogue, but at present I want only to suggest that the verse satires of the 1750s and 1760s seem

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27 Lockwood, Post-Augustan Satire, 109.
much more artistic in purpose—meaning the style and craft is not a feature but an end in itself—than most of what we have seen in earlier chapters. This tendency does not seem odd if one is thinking in terms of Pope, but alongside the hundreds upon hundreds of satires produced from the Restoration through the 1740s, this spate of chiefly aesthetic satires is disconcerting. The distinction between “satirical” poetry written for its own sake and practical, present-centered satire written to make things happen is fundamental—a difference evident in the satiric output of Charles Churchill.

Churchill’s non-political satire

Churchill before Wilkes is a prominent satirist—The Rosciad made him a household name—but he is also doing what most of his contemporaries do. He is a poet, obsessively concerned with the poet’s role in society, adamant about his independence as an author, and not much interested in making things happen. Throughout Post-Augustan Satire, Lockwood emphasizes the self-absorption of much of the satiric poetry in this period, rightly observing that, “Churchill more often shows himself . . . as concerned with protecting his individual integrity and asserting his own genius in a world that cannot care for such things.”28 The focus, then, is not on the world and how it can be changed, and neither is it on the particular target at issue. In Churchill’s non-political satire, his attention is largely on himself. His non-political output reflects the major trends in verse satire of this quarter century: it is sometimes aggressively self-defensive about the writer’s province (as in The Apology); sometimes a performance of preaching (as in The Times); and sometimes simply a literary display (as in The Ghost).

Like Pope, Churchill loudly and persistently defends the satirist’s right to pass judgment; like Smollett in Advice and Reproof and the authors of the many “dialogues” between the poet and a friend, he writes satire about satire. His second published poem, The Apology (1761; 1s), is a contentious response to the displeasure with which The Rosciad had been met in the Critical Review. He plays the injured

28 Lockwood, Post-Augustan Satire, 22. Says Lockwood: “Churchill’s canon might be divided into poems that profess to be about himself and poems that profess to be about something else but are nevertheless about himself anyway” (46).
poet, lamenting that the critics, “With partial rage rush forth, —Oh! shame to tell!— / To crush a bard just
bursting from the shell” (ll. 13-14). Asserting his right to satirize the actors, he insists that the stage is
“a subject fair and free— / ’Tis yours—’tis mine—’tis Public Property” (ll. 186-87). In the end, as
Lockwood points out, “Churchill translates his quarrel with the critics into a profounder opposition
between freedom and slavery.” He again champions the independent spirit—his idée fixe—in Night
(1761; 1s), a work that John Sitter describes as “an odd mixture of social criticism, bohemian bravado and
earnest individualism.” Night is the frank libertine’s defense of his modus vivendi. Churchill sets up a
contrast between the happy, independent, reasonable “sons of NIGHT” and the prudent majority, whose
way of life is not to be admired or emulated (l. 18). They are “slaves to business, bodies without soul,”
and their day time world is one of hypocrisy and unreason: “THROUGH a false medium things are shewn
by day, / Pomp, wealth, and titles judgment lead astray” (ll. 7, 139-40). Brazenly asserting his
independence, the opinion of the majority be damned, the poet loudly proclaims, “I would not be that
THING, that PRUDENT MAN,” declaring a preference for standing “up assur’d with conscious pride /
Alone, than err with millions on thy side” (ll. 344, 381-82). Night is not a purposive satire—what
would he be trying to accomplish?—but a boisterously indignant display of Churchillian audacity.

Churchill, like Pope, is preoccupied by the satirist’s role and is willing to mount a pulpit. One of
the oddities in his career is The Times (1764), the only entirely non-political satire he produced after

29 All quotations come from The Poetical Works of Charles Churchill, ed. Douglas Grant (Oxford:
30 Lockwood, Post-Augustan Satire, 47.
31 Sitter, “Political, satirical, didactic and lyric poetry (II): after Pope,” in The Cambridge History of
32 Churchill’s denunciation of “prudence” is blistering:
   PRUDENCE, almighty PRUDENCE gives thee all.
   Keep up appearances; there lies the test,
   The world will give thee credit for the rest.
   Outward be fair, however foul within;
   Sin if thou wilt, but then in secret sin. (ll. 310-14)
33 I quote in passing an astute observation made by Smith in his discussion of Night, a poem ostentatiously
celebratory of social nonconformity: “A wide gap exists between Churchill and men like Dryden, Swift, and Pope
with their faith in normalcy and their intolerance of aberration” (Charles Churchill, 41). Dryden, Swift, and Pope
are far from uniform in their worldviews, but distinguishing Churchill from his major satiric predecessors makes
very good sense.
allying himself with Wilkes. In this rancorous denunciation on the theme of “ō tempora, ō mores,” Churchill adopts a self-assured Juvenalian stance, surveying his world with solemn disapprobation: “Time was, e’er Temperance had fled the realm,” he reflects, and “Time was, that Men had conscience,” and so on (II. 13, 33). The fractious Juvenalian deplores corruption, duplicity, unkindness, and other general sins, and he bitterly criticizes the abuse of privilege. The Times is best known for its forceful attack on homosexuality; John Sainsbury calls it the “most sustained literary assault on sodomy.”

Churchill seems likelier to be simulating fury than giving vent to real hostility, but in any case at least he plays the role of indignant moralist. Like a number of his contemporaries, he performs the part of righteous social guardian, satiric champion of Virtue over Vice.

Churchill’s least purposive satire is perhaps The Ghost (1762-63), which is not self-defensive but self-consciously poetic. Scholars who mention this teasing, meandering poem usually highlight its “Shandean” element of playful digressiveness and free-association, a connection contemporaries likewise made. Churchill’s ostensible subject is the Cock Lane Ghost affair, and that incident is precisely what he does not focus on. Raymond J. Smith notes that, “Churchill uses the ghost story in somewhat the way that Sterne was using the life of Tristram Shandy—it is the nucleus for a virtual miscellany of parody and satire held together by a web of associations.” Churchill covers a broad range of socio-political and literary topics, but insofar as The Ghost has a central satiric point, it lies in his mocking exposure of “collective popular fancy,” the widespread tendency of people to abandon reason and be led astray by superstition and credulity. The Ghost is jauntily bantering, but it has little satiric point. Bertelsen argues that the Nonsense Club writers believed in “free” writing, emphasizing “the importance of the poet’s mental process and the spontaneous manipulation of his materials. The poet does not plan his

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35 See Lockwood, Post-Augustan Satire, 26.
36 Smith, Charles Churchill, 42.
37 Lockwood, Post-Augustan Satire, 85. While the mockery in The Ghost is relatively light, some of its topical references are stingingly satiric, as in his portrayal of Samuel Johnson as “Pomposo.” He depicts Pomposo as a powerful conversationalist and a genuinely erudite man (so far so good), but he also says that Pomposo “damns all Learning but his own,” and describes him as having “Features so horrid, were it light, / Would put the Devil himself to flight” (II.666, 687-88).
work in relationship to a set of literary laws or purposes.” And, he continues, Churchill practiced the spontaneity he preached, especially in a work like *The Ghost*, a free-wheeling, fast-moving poem upon nothing (a non-existent ghost). The author of *The Ghost* is a mischievous, defiantly unconventional artist at play.

These non-political satires do not amount to a coherent program of satire, but they do reflect what Lockwood calls the “increasing self-absorption and inwardness of satire.” The crux here is that Churchill as a non-political satirist is primarily a Poet, worrying about the poet’s role, playing moral custodian, and exercising his imaginative powers. These satires are personal and literary, looking inward rather than outward. They all deal, after a fashion, with Churchill’s favorite theme: the independent spirit. If we did not know that he was the author of these works, they would simply be categorized among most of the other verse satires produced in this quarter century. The quality is slightly better than average, but they do not represent anything unusual in mid-century satiric practice. When Churchill meets Wilkes, however, his personal/literary obsession with the independent spirit becomes political—no longer merely a matter of self-definition vis-à-vis the world, but now a matter of influencing that world. While he never wholly abandons his concern with his own role as a poet, in aid of Wilkes he does turn his attention and his satire outward. Churchill becomes unrepresentative of later-eighteenth-century verse satire when he is given a cause.

II. Wilkes, Churchill, and political controversy in the 1760s

Mid-century verse satire represents a huge change in satiric practice. Whether biting or simply deflationary, purposively propagandistic or strictly complaint, a very high proportion of late-seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century satire is politicized—and outward-looking. In the late 1720s and 1730s, satirists still have remarks aplenty on state affairs, but the work of Young, Pope, and a few others represents an increasingly conspicuous type of elaborately poetic satire. By the mid-century, the world of

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POAS has all but disappeared; poetic satire is almost exclusively a literary enterprise. Satire and partisan propaganda are not discrete enterprises for the likes of Dryden, Defoe, Brown, Maynwaring, Tutchin, and Swift. In the world of the 1750s and 1760s, however, verse satirists mostly tend not to use their works to voice serious critique of socio-political circumstances—so much so that Churchill’s use of poetry in Wilkes’s anti-ministerial campaign makes him exceptional among his contemporaries. Writing as a poet-patriot, Churchill is versifier and propagandist.

When Churchill met Wilkes is unclear, but by the summer of 1762 they were co-authoring London’s most outspoken opposition journal, The North Briton. Theirs was a union of twin souls: both were pleasure-seeking, independence-preaching, self-proclaimed social rebels who reveled in the celebrity that their scandalous personal lives brought them. Both were champions of autonomy and free expression. Each man proudly asserted his patriotism, and both perceived in the Earl of Bute a triple threat to England. Bute was a Scotsman, a Stuart, and a peace-monger bent on ending the Seven Years’ War that had been so effectively managed by Pitt. How much Churchill worried about political affairs before he allied himself to Wilkes is hard to guess, but—whether inspired by newfound political activism or simply desirous of taking up the cudgel for his friend—he enthusiastically joined Wilkes in a vitriolic anti-ministerial campaign.

The North Briton

The North Briton was launched on 5 June 1762 as a counter-attack to Smollett’s pro-ministerial Briton. In the first issue of the Briton (29 May 1762), Smollett had gone after an anti-Bute essay written by Wilkes for The Monitor. Wilkes had originally imagined a three-issue project, specifically meant to undercut the Briton, but, as Bertelsen explains, that plan was abandoned when the journal’s “irreverent

40 Most scholars assume that the relationship began in 1761-62 (see Bertelsen, The Nonsense Club, 167), which seems possible. George Nobbe points out that the two men could have had occasion to meet in 1759. See The North Briton: A Study in Political Propaganda (1939; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1966), 13-14.

appeal for ‘liberty of the press’ caught the mood of the town.” Wilkes and Churchill decided to run *The North Briton* for an indefinite period of time.\(^{42}\) The essays were scurrilously anti-ministerial, praising Pitt and abusing the Scots in general and Bute in particular, though often by way of historical allegory or other forms of indirection. Churchill was evidently responsible for five complete issues,\(^ {43}\) whose anti-Bute implications are crystal clear. In No. 10 (7 August 1762), Churchill’s speaker (“Presbyter”) foretells future Scottish supremacy in England, an admonitory satiric tactic to which he would return in *The Prophecy of Famine* (1763). I doubt that Wilkes thought of himself as a satirist, though *The North Briton* has its fair share of ridicule and ironic attack. Its essays are, in any case, politically combative, hostile, swaggering, and brashly subversive.

Opposition became treason in the incendiary No. 45, published on 23 April 1763. This fearless and forthright (non-satirical) essay is a response to the parliamentary King’s Speech made by George Grenville, who had succeeded Bute as prime minister after his resignation earlier in the month. About Grenville’s speech, which had commended the Peace of Paris, Wilkes is unambiguously hostile:

> This week has given the public the most abandoned instance of ministerial effrontery ever attempted to be imposed on mankind. . . . I am in doubt, whether the imposition is greater on the sovereign, or the nation. Every friend of his country must lament that a prince of so many great and amiable qualities, whom England truly reveres, can be brought to give the sanction of his sacred name to the most odious measures, and to the most unjustifiable, public declarations, from a throne ever renowned for truth, honour, and unsullied virtue. (2:230-31)

Wilkes makes absolutely clear that his target is Grenville rather than George III, but the authorities took it otherwise. The King was annoyed, and the administration was glad of the chance to silence a persistent gadfly.\(^ {44}\) The story of Wilkes’s arrest, the ministry’s mistake in issuing a general warrant without naming an individual, and Wilkes’s release needs no repeating. Popular support for the triumphant patriot was

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\(^{42}\) Bertelsen, *The Nonsense Club*, 173. The appeal for a free press came in the opening line of *The North Briton*’s inaugural issue: “The liberty of the press is the birth-right of a BRITON, and is justly esteemed the firmest bulwark of the liberties of this country. It has been the terror of all bad ministers. . . .” All quotations come from the 2nd edition of *The North Briton*, in 3 vols. (printed by Wilkes on his private press and published in Dublin in 1763); this quotation is at 1:1.

\(^{43}\) Smith, *Charles Churchill*, 53; Nobbe, *The North Briton*, 266. Nobbe lists Churchill’s contributions as Nos. 7, 8, 10, 27, and 42; Smith attributes to Churchill Nos. 8, 10, 18, 27, and 42.

tremendous: his oppositional journalism and his dogged insistence on freedom turned Wilkes into a hero, and Churchill devoted his verse to support of the patriot cause.\textsuperscript{45}

\textit{Churchill's political satire}

Wilkes is not really a satirist, but he is a political beneficiary of satire in the form of Churchill’s aggressive Wilkesite poems. Churchill’s first major political effort in verse is \textit{The Prophecy of Famine} (1763; 2s 6d†), inscribed to Wilkes and including a lengthy tribute to him (ll. 149-78). The poem begins with ironic praise of Scotland; proceeds to ridicule the Scots as “poor, mean, despis’d, insulted” (l. 180); and then introduces two Scottish shepherds, Sawney and Jockey, whose conversation reveals the barrenness of their homeland and the despair of its people. Their exchange is interrupted by the arrival of Famine, who urges the dejected swains to persevere. Her prophetic counsel serves as Churchill’s satiric warning to his English readers: “The pow’r of mischief lost,” she insists, “retain the will.” Though the Scots have long “borne this mighty weight of ill,” happier times are coming: she foretells the Scots’ takeover of England, not by force but by patient cunning. The goddess predicts that “the weak English will help themselves to cheat,” abandoning the principles of 1688 and endangering their country in order to appease the Scots (ll. 434, 444, 548).

\begin{verbatim}
To gain our love, with honours shall they grace
The old adherents of the STUART race,
Who pointed out, no matter by what name,
TORIES or JACOBITES, are still the same;
To sooth our rage, the temporising brood
Shall break the ties of truth and gratitude,
Against their Saviour venom’d falshoods frame,
And brand with calumny their WILLIAM’s name. (ll. 549-56)
\end{verbatim}

Churchill’s message is clear. Bute’s rise to power is but the first concession, and England needs to be aware of the threat posed by its northern neighbor. The satiric point of the piece is not its derisive anti-Scot sentiment, genuine though that is. As in \textit{The North Briton} No. 10, Churchill puts treachery into the

\textsuperscript{45} On Wilkes’s pursuit of legal redress and the popular support of his actions, see Thomas, \textit{John Wilkes}, 32-36.
mouth of a pro-Scot speaker. He looks to capitalize on English prejudices in order to heighten anxieties about and popular resistance to Bute’s ascendancy.

Churchill’s other political satires appeared after Wilkes’s arrest (30 April 1763) and subsequent release (6 May). These works have both positive and negative propagandistic effect. Churchill speaks for personal and political freedom, and against Wilkes’s particular antagonists. *The Author* (December 1763), *The Duellist* (1764; 2s 6d†), and *The Candidate* (1764; 2s 6d) are not exclusively political ventures. The first has Churchill lamenting the decline in English letters and defending his truth-telling satire; the second is an allegory in which “STATE-CRAFT” defeats “LIBERTY”; the third expresses the poet’s disinclination to continue his single-handed battle against vice.46

Whatever their focus on the poet in society (etc.), however, these poems are topical pieces, occasioned by incidents concerning Wilkes and conspicuously scorching his enemies. In *The Author*, Churchill blasts pro-government hacks like John Shebbeare, whose *History of the Excellence and Decline . . . of the Sumatrans* (1760) concluded with a panegyric on Bute and George III. He also satirizes John Kidgell and the Earl of Sandwich, both of whom had been involved in the controversy surrounding Wilkes’s *Essay on Woman*.47 *The Duellist* is a response to Samuel Martin’s challenge to Churchill’s patriot friend; its object is “to support the opinion that the duel was an attempt by the administration to assassinate Wilkes.”48 The poet reproachfully describes the duel as a dark “contrivance,” whose engineers wanted to “tear up Freedom by the root, / Destroy a WILKES, and fix a BUTE” (ll. 148, 152-53). He rebukes those who would follow Martin’s lead in challenging Wilkes, feigning honor but interested only in the government’s “filthy lucre.” Should such a villain plot against the life of a true English hero, the poet intones in the last lines, may that scoundrel “The general contempt engage, / And be the MARTIN

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46 Lockwood’s discussion of these poems is excellent (*Post-Augustan Satire*, 57-59). Churchill’s allegory in *The Duellist* is a good example of the trend toward abstractions described in section I; the impact of the satire is radically affected by such poetic machinery. Lockwood asks, “Is it possible to sustain a satiric purpose in this kind of poem?” (82).
47 Sandwich, says the poet bluntly, “from the moment of his birth / Made human Nature a reproach on earth” (ll. 227-28).
of his age” (ll. 234, 247-48). In *The Candidate*, he goes after Sandwich again.49 In each of these satires, Churchill fashions himself an impartial arbiter and a devoted champion of liberty and patriotism.50 He also earns his reputation as the “Bruiser,” excoriating those on the wrong side of his political cause.

Nowhere is Churchill nastier than in *An Epistle to William Hogarth* (1763; 2s 6d), in part a vehement defense of his right to produce satire and in part a bludgeoning of a political enemy. He devotes a good deal of time and energy to his self-defense (Hogarth enters on line 309 of a 654-line poem), but his vilification of Hogarth is savage.51 Garrick called the *Epistle* the “most bloody performance that has been publish’d in my time.”52 Churchill’s satire is retaliation, a personally abusive contribution to an ongoing war between Wilkes and Hogarth. The battle began after the appearance of plate 1 of *The Times* (7 September 1762), in which Hogarth criticized Newcastle and Pitt and supported Bute—representing, Jenny Uglow says, “Hogarth’s only directly party-political statement in all his long years.”53 Wilkes was piqued by his old friend’s entrance into politics and his support of Bute, and in a letter to Churchill he suggested that they go after him: “Hogarth has begun the attack to-day—I shall

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49 On the satire against Sandwich, see Smith, *Charles Churchill*, 86-90.
50 “Patriotism” is obviously a vexed term and concept. See Dustin Griffin, *Patriotism and Poetry in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), especially chap. 1. Churchill’s admirers praise him as a patriot-poet; his detractors charge him and Wilkes with false patriotism. Examples of the latter are many, but see *The Conciliad: or the Triumph of Patriotism* (1761), *Patriotism! A Farce. As is acted by his Majesty’s Servants* (1763), Richard Bentley’s *Patriotism, A Mock-Heroic* (1763), *The Cap and Staff, or the Recantation of the Rev. Captain Charles C[harles] Churchill, Addressed to John W[ilkes], Esq;* (1764), *The Patriot Poet, A Satire. Inscribed to the Reverend Mr. C[harles] Churchill* (1764), and *Churchill Dissected. A Poem* (1764). These attacks tend to be fairly predictable, and often more personal than political. For a fuller list (and analysis) of responses to Churchill, see Beatty, “Churchill’s Influence on Minor Eighteenth-Century Satirists.”
51 Churchill integrates the heatedly unapologetic *apologia*, says Lockwood, “into his attack on Hogarth so as to leave no doubt that the responsibility for his anger . . . lies with Hogarth and ‘the times,’ not with Charles Churchill” (*Post-Augustan Satire*, 55). As Bertelsen points out, the *Epistle* is “a personal satire not only in the sense that it attacks Hogarth the man (rather than the artist), but because it encompasses so many of Churchill’s personal concerns” (*The Nonsense Club*, 201).
52 *The Letters of David Garrick*, ed. David M. Little and George M. Kahrl, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 1:378 (10 July 1763). Garrick added, “I am very desirous to know the opinion of the People, for I am really much, very much hurt at it—his description of his Age & infirmities is surely too shocking & barbarous—is Hogarth really ill, or does he meditate revenge?”
attack him in hobbling prose, you will I hope in smooth-pac’d verse.” Wilkes accused Hogarth of vanity and spite in *The North Briton* No. 17 (25 September 1762), and the painter responded by representing Wilkes in the pillory (with *The North Briton* around his neck) in plate 2 of *The Times*. Just after Wilkes’s arrest, Hogarth’s famous satirical portrait appeared, depicting the notoriously unattractive patriot as squint-eyed and leering: “He twirls the cap of liberty on its pole, a laughing man who would exploit the very people he seduced.”

Wilkes did not counter, but Churchill did on his behalf. He reiterates Wilkes’s charges against the painter—envy, malice, egotism, and so on. He then intensifies his attack, ruthlessly mocking Hogarth’s physical “decay”: “The Body shrivell’d up, thy dim eyes sunk / Within their sockets deep” (ll. 419, 423-24). The poem concludes with a piece of cruel counsel:

Hence, Dotard, to thy closet, shut thee in,
By deep repentance wash away thy sin,
From haunts of men to shame and sorrow fly,
And, on the verge of death, learn how to die. (ll. 431-34)

This is Churchill at his most punitive, drubbing the object of his detestation. Hogarth would retort with *The Bruiser*, his memorable sketch of Churchill, a tame response by the standards of the *Epistle*. In a decade hardly known for its harshly castigatory satire, Churchill’s invective is exceptional—and he meant it to be. While composing the *Epistle*, he wrote to Wilkes that

My Head is full of Hogarth, and as I like not his Company I believe I shall get him on Paper, not so much to please the Public, not so much for the sake of Justice, as for my own ease—a motive ever powerful with indolent minds. . . . I have laid in a great stock of gall, and I do not intend to spare it on this occasion—he shall be welcome to every drop of it. (*Correspondence*, 48)

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55 In No. 17, Wilkes expresses regret at Hogarth’s decision to join the political controversy: “I am grieved to see the genius of Hogarth . . . sunk to a level with the miserable tribe of party etchers, and now, in his rapid decline, entering into the poor politics of the faction of the day, and descending to low personal abuse, instead of instructing the world, as he could once, by manly moral satire” (1:157).

56 Uglow, *Hogarth*, 675. In *Rodondo; or, The State Jugglers. Cantos I. and II* (1763), Hugh Dalrymple depicts Wilkes in much the same way, smirking and untrustworthy: “Wilkes squinted with tremendous Leer, / And swore he would not guzzle Beer; / But, added with a horrid Grin, / I’ll pledge you o’er and o’er in Gin” (11).
He is manifestly reveling in his own powers of defamation, but he is also clearly invested in defending his patriot friend and demonizing Wilkes’s enemies. Churchill’s purposes as a political poet are fairly straightforward: this is propaganda, championing Wilkesite notions of independence, smearing antagonists, and rousing popular support for the cause.

Visual satire

The political controversy of the 1760s inspired Churchill to develop a more purposive form of satire than that practiced by his fellow poets, and likewise the political visual satire of the decade has little to do with the trends reflected in verse. Later-eighteenth-century political caricature and graphic satire exists in vast quantities; this material has been well-studied from various angles, and I will not attempt anything like an exhaustive survey. 57 These prints represent a “popular” form of political satire, widely accessible even to those with little education or political knowledge. 58 Vincent Carretta emphasizes the degree to which the increase in caricature and visual satire accompanies a “great rise in political interest and information outside of Parliament’s walls.” 59 The graphic satire of the early 1760s, whether oppositional or ministerial, is part of the battle for public opinion. Its creators operate on the assumption that such opinion matters. This is not art for art’s sake, whatever the fun of mashing prominent people, and neither is it angling for reformation. Like Churchill in his propagandistic invectives, many of these satirists are trying to besmirch their targets, whether directly or by way of allegorical representation.

The satire is both political and personal. Bute’s supporters represent Pitt as a false patriot, as in

Sic Transit Gloria Mundi (1762). Or, like Hogarth, they depict Wilkes as a self-interested charlatan,


58 See Hunt, Defining John Bull, 12.

59 Carretta, George III and the Satirists, 53.
misleading the people he claims to represent. Bute’s detractors rehearse standard charges: he bribes unscrupulous writers to support the ministry (*The Hungry Mob of Scriblers and Etchers*), he is usurping royal power (*The Highland Seer, or The Political Vision; 6d†*), and so on. Like Churchill’s *The Prophecy of Famine*, the 1763 print *Scotch Paradice a View of the Bute[eye]full Garden of Edenborough* insinuates a Scottish takeover of England. In the 1762 *John Bull’s House sett in Flames*, a “bare-assed Bute fans the flames engulfing St. James’s Palace.” This is the print that incited Hogarth to publish *The Times*, where George III plays city-saving fireman and a union of Scottish and English men lend support, while the opponents of the Peace of Paris fan the flames. Some of this satire is relatively crude, and some much more sophisticated. Carretta is excellent on the changing attitudes toward George III as reflected in the visual representations of the 1760s and 1770s, and he also traces differences in the iconographic patterns found in visual satire of this quarter century and those common a generation earlier. Diana Donald has a helpful discussion of the Wilkesite supporters’ use of “emblematic shorthand” (e.g., Bute depicted as a jackboot), in part to avoid prosecution for libel, but also to encourage a sort of secret language of the people. I cannot do justice to here to the various trends and methods of graphic satire, but I do think a basic point can be made. Literature scholars do not tend to include visual satire in their accounts, and in this case that omission is especially problematic. This material represents a very different kind of enterprise from what goes on in poetry, fiction, and drama. Like Churchill’s atypically purposive satire, caricature and graphic satire tend to be deflationary, defamatory, and

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60 Both satires are from 1762; Carretta prints these (and a number of other examples) in *George III and the Satirists* (pp. 55 and 69 respectively) and discusses them at pp. 54 and 68.

61 On *Scotch Paradice*, see Carretta (*George III and the Satirists*, 59, 63-64); he prints *John Bull’s House sett in Flames* on p. 58, and the quotation comes from p. 57; on Hogarth’s *The Times*, see pp. 56-57.

62 See especially chaps. 2 and 3 of *George III and the Satirists* for changing representations of George III; on the distinctions between thirties’ and sixties’ visual satire (for example), see *The Snarling Muse*, chap. 8 and epilogue.

63 Donald, *The Age of Caricature*, 50-58; quotation at p. 54. Donald issues a salutary warning: “Any attempt to analyze the iconography of Wilkesite propaganda raises . . . the considerable problem of establishing the social complexion of the intended audience and, more difficult still, of attempting to read the prints as such an audience would have read them” (56).
propagandistic—a form of invective rarely found in this quarter century, and a long way from the sympathetic slush associated with this period.

The “Junius” letters

Like The North Briton essays, the “Junius” letters include derisive attack but were not necessarily conceived as satire. I include these letters (published in the Public Advertiser from 21 January 1769 to 21 January 1772) because they represent political propaganda of a sort that is closely connected to the issues with which Wilkes and Churchill are so concerned.\(^6^4\) The mystery of authorship remains and is likely to remain unsolved,\(^6^5\) but the letters’ polemical thrust is clear. “Junius”—borrowing his name from Lucius Junius Brutus, the popular republican hero—defends Wilkes, champions individual rights, and opposes George III’s ministers.\(^6^6\) The Junius letters represent a stark contrast to the flabby literary satire covered in section I, and my goal here is to highlight that distinction.

Little satire in this quarter century seriously challenges the status quo, but Junius vehemently does so, objecting to the current political circumstances and demanding change. In the inaugural letter, he laments that England is in a bad way, and he knows who to blame: “we are governed by counsels, from which a reasonable man can expect no remedy but poison, no relief but death.” By way of conclusion, he observes that if the country can ever again flourish, future generations will hardly believe that “their ancestors could have survived . . . while a Duke of Grafton was Prime Minister, a Lord North Chancellor of the Exchequer, a Weymouth and a Hillsborough Secretaries of State, a Granby Commander in Chief, and a Mansfield chief criminal Judge of the kingdom” (33). This is a roster of the criminally culpable.

\(^6^4\) This is the date run given by John Cannon in his edition of The Letters of Junius (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978). Other letters were written by “Junius” after 21 January 1772, Cannon explains, but those were published under different names (xvii, n. 5).

\(^6^5\) In the dedication to the 1771 edition of the letters, the author swore that no one would find him out: “I am the sole depository of my own secret, and it shall perish with me” (The Letters of Junius, 8). For an extensive discussion of the issue of authorship, see Cannon’s Appendix 8 (pp. 539-72). All quotations come from this edition.

\(^6^6\) In The False Alarm, 2nd edn. (1770), Johnson writes against oppositional politics of the sort espoused by Junius, defending the status quo and attacking Wilkes as an agent of “Causeless discontent” and “seditious violence” (4).
Junius is passing judgment and naming names. In letter XV (8 July 1769; addressed to the Duke of Grafton), he opens with ironic praise of his addressee:

> If nature had given you an understanding qualified to keep pace with the wishes and principles of your heart, she would have made you, perhaps, the most formidable minister that ever was employed... to accomplish the ruin of a free people.... We owe it to the bounty of providence, that the completest depravity of the heart is sometimes strangely united with a confusion of the mind. (80-81)

Translation: the unscrupulous Duke of Grafton would be a dangerous man if he had the wits to succeed in his machinations. This is exceptionally unfriendly, penned by a man who means to do damage.

Whether bluntly denouncing his targets or damning tongue-in-cheek, Junius is trying to influence real-life politics. John Cannon argues that Junius’s “immediate political objective was the overthrow of the Grafton administration, which he regarded as dangerously subservient to the King,” and, he continues, “There can be little doubt that the stinging attacks upon Grafton helped to break his nerve and persuade him to resign” (xix). This sounds optimistic, but at least for a while Junius believed that public pressure on the government could matter:

> They, who conceive that our newspapers are no restraint upon bad men, or impediment to the execution of bad measures, know nothing of this country. In that state of abandoned servility and prostitution, to which the undue influence of the crown has reduced the other branches of the legislature, our ministers and magistrates have in reality little punishment to fear, and few difficulties to contend with, beyond the censure of the press, and the spirit of resistance, which it excites among the people. (14-15)

Grafton’s resignation, however, was followed by North’s ascendancy, and by 1773 Junius was despondent and defeated: “... the Cause & the public. both are given up. I feel for the honour of this Country, when I see that there are not ten men in it, who will unite & stand together. ... But it is all alike, vile & contemptible.” Junius writes in fierce resistance to the status quo when he thinks that outcry might produce results, and he ceases to rail when he loses all hope of the possibility of change.

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67 This passage appears in a private letter (19 January 1773) to Henry Sampson Woodfall, editor of the *Public Advertiser* (printed in Cannon, p. 393).
Wilkes’s *Essay on Woman*

Although the *Essay on Woman* is an insubstantial and non-political venture, it frequently gets mentioned in discussions of *The North Briton*, and as a satire of sorts it needs at least summary analysis here. After Wilkes’s release in the summer of 1763, the ministry got hold of the *Essay* (now known to have been written with Thomas Potter) and tried to prosecute its author for libel of Bishop Warburton. The details of the *Essay*’s discovery remain vague, and the subsequent sequence of events is complicated—involving ministerial contrivances to find copies, debates about what charges to bring, witnesses, duels, Wilkes’s failure to appear for sentencing, and his eventual flight to Paris. The controversy was serious, the work itself decidedly not. It is a bawdy parody of Pope’s *Essay on Man*, with notes allegedly by Warburton, who had edited the *Essay on Man* after Pope’s death. Potter hated Warburton, as Arthur H. Cash explains, but for Wilkes “the writing of the *Essay* was a game, a sort of sophomoric literary exercise.”

The dirty humor is indeed sophomoric, but the parody is clever enough, and imagining Pope’s irritation at having his pieties transformed into a Rochesterian celebration of sexual promiscuity is funny. Pope’s “Laugh where we must, be candid where we can” passage becomes, in the Potter/Wilkes version, a warning against premature ejaculation:

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Observe how Nature works, and if it rise
Too quick and rapid, check it ere it flies;
Spend when we must, but keep it while we can:
Thus Godlike will be deem’d the Ways of Man. (ll. 13-16)
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Wilkes travesties Pope, rewriting *The Dying Christian to His Soul* as *The Dying Lover to His Prick*, and throughout the *Essay* he combines uninhibited libertinism with cheerful blasphemy. The piece is plenty irreverent, but it is strictly playful.

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Three observations by way of a conclusion to sections I and II. (1) The death of satire cliché is based largely on the marked shift from “satire” to “sentiment,” but the feebleness of verse satire in this quarter century has almost nothing to do with softening attitudes toward human nature. Satirists have very little to be livid about, given the relatively quiescent socio-political circumstances, and that seems a likelier cause of change than does an upsurge in finer feelings. (2) A sharp division exists, in the 1760s, between “Satire” and “Propaganda.” Whereas earlier poets evidently understood political commentary as part of the province of the satirist, much of the strongly propagandistic commentary in this period appears in newspapers and pamphlets. Verse satire becomes, in this period, a largely literary exercise. (3) Churchill is (sometimes) an exception to that generalization; he is an oddity. His divided career, with its two different modes of satire, helps highlight the distinction I drew in chapter 6 between Pope’s and Swift’s satiric practices. Churchill’s non-political poetry is predominantly inward-looking, reflective, deliberately self-absorbed; his Wilkesite, politicized satire is much more outward-focused and purposively combative. *The Apology* is a self-defensive poem about poetry; the *Epistle to Hogarth* is a bloody-minded demolition of a political antagonist. The two represent not simply a change in subject matter or tone—they are entirely different enterprises.

III. Satire in the commercial theatre

Studies of eighteenth-century English satire rarely have much to say about the drama, especially after the Licensing Act of 1737. The usual assumption seems to be that after the imposition of censorship, satire in the plays all but disappears. Consequently, little gets said even about Foote and Macklin, let alone the likes of Hugh Kelly, Arthur Murphy, and Oliver Goldsmith. Contrariwise, students of the drama tend to focus on the laughing/sentimental dichotomy, and are more interested in assessing the degree of humor versus the degree of emotional slop than in analyzing the nature of the satire that can be found in the plays. The supposition on both sides seems to be that “satire” and “drama,” especially increasingly sentimentalized drama, are unrelated ventures, and that such satire as may be found in these plays is of little or no significance.
In this section I want to demonstrate that satiric drama does not come to an end when Walpole silences the yappy Henry Fielding, though it does differ considerably from that of the 1730s and earlier. Some of the best dramatic satire in the period covered by the last chapter was done at the Little Haymarket during a time of intense competition among theatres, no censorship, and tremendous political turbulence. *The Beggar’s Opera* and *The Historical Register* would not have been written or staged a generation later. The Licensing Act of 1737 not only enforced censorship, but (worse) it also put an end to experimentation by closing fringe theatres and effectively ending competition between the two patent theatres, Drury Lane and Covent Garden. Most of the plays that do get staged are designed at least in part as vehicles for the companies’ favorite actors and actresses, and playwrights and theatre managers like David Garrick and John Rich are acutely aware of what audiences want and will pay for. The presence of censorship, the absence of competition, the need for commercially viable vehicles for actors, and the relative quiescence of domestic politics have major implications for satiric practice, changing what is possible and/or practical for playwrights—but these factors by no means render satire extinct.

Our understanding of dramatic satire in the third quarter of the eighteenth century will be badly skewed if our definition privileges harsh satire and political targets. In a recent study of eighteenth-century dramatic satire, Jean I. Marsden rightly observes that the Licensing Act significantly affected satiric drama, and that the plays produced in the third quarter of the century use “humor rather than invective.” True enough, but Marsden is too narrow in her account of satiric focus and target: “playwrights with satiric interests turned away from contemporary politics, and drama instead focused on the foibles of the Beau Monde.” This dismissive conclusion has its basis in a widespread assumption

70. The calamitous effects of the Licensing Act on British drama follow from the limitation to patent theatres, not from censorship. Political plays became virtually impossible, but the drama turned stodgy not because of censorship, or sentimentalism, or bourgeois audiences, but because without competition the theatre managers saw no reason to risk money on new plays, and certainly not on experimental ones” (Hume, *Henry Fielding*, 249).

that satire and sentiment are oppositional terms; where sentiment is, satire is not. Contemporaries, however, neither shared that supposition nor adhered to it in their production or appreciation of drama.  

What sort of satire do we find on the later-eighteenth-century stage? Dramatic satire occurs in two conspicuous and distinct varieties. (1) Social comedy, almost always in mainpiece form. Most of these plays are generalized and fairly good-humored, either pleasantly moral or satire/sentiment hybrids whose critique is very mild indeed. (2) Lightweight entertainment, generally in afterpiece form, sometimes topical and sometimes not, varying sharply or punitive but rarely substantial. In this section, I will describe the common trends in these two forms of satire, and then go on to deal in separate subsections with three highly prominent and quite different playwrights of the third quarter of the century—Foote, Macklin, and Garrick.

Social comedy

Satire in later-eighteenth-century social comedies tends to be humane, reform-oriented, and strongly positive in its authors’ assumptions about human nature. Some of these plays are weightier than others, for example, and the emphasis on sympathy or pathos varies from playwright to playwright, but the motifs and patterns are pretty standard. These comedies tend to include exemplary characters; offer tidy solutions to never-very-worrying problems; operate on the basis of distributive justice; and suppose that people are basically decent at heart. This is not the comedy of ridicule, abuse, and punishment, and its satire is a long way from the attack mode admired by most twentieth-century scholars. These works were definitely conceived of as satiric by their authors and/or by contemporaries, however, and the satire they contain is very much in line with the exemplary and instructional modes of satire that we have regularly encountered in earlier parts of this survey.

Consider, for example, Benjamin Hoadly’s immensely popular *The Suspicious Husband* (1747). It is by modern critical standards a sentimental play, but contemporaries understood it as an exercise in

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Kinservik has made this argument in *Disciplining Satire*, effectively demonstrating the inapplicability of “the pejorative definition” of satire for many eighteenth-century playwrights and theatre-goers (20).
The Suspicious Husband has a moral without being drearily moralistic, and the combination of benevolence and ridicule is highly effective. It is pseudo-libertine comedy, full of nocturnal intrigues and attempted-seduction scenes carried out by people who are ultimately shown to be decent and well-meaning. What looks like betrayal never is; the happy ending is not in doubt; the men like each other, the women like each other, and the rake performs the most selfless action in the play. Ranger is no model, as he himself recognizes. The play opens with his shamed contemplation of the previous night, full of sick-making wine and offensive noise, and all so he could have “the Conversation of a Company of Fellows I despise. . . . Honest Ranger, take my Word for it, thou art a mighty silly Fellow” (1). Whatever his failings and indiscretions, however, he is at bottom a good-hearted man. When he decides to help Jacintha to her beloved rather than to pursue his own interests with her, he expresses real joy at being able to do the square thing:

\[73\] The Gentleman’s Magazine 17 (March 1747), 140. On the contemporary response, see Kinservik, Disciplining Satire, 120-28. Kinservik points out that The Suspicious Husband was the first successful satiric comedy following the passage of the Licensing Act, arguing that the censorship of the stage compelled playwrights to produce sympathetic and morally instructive rather than punitive satire.

\[74\] Bevis attributes the play’s success to Hoadly’s deft mixture of modes: “Sentiment is present in strict moderation; intrigue furnishes the chief interest but does not entirely dominate; the Restoration world is faintly evoked so as to appeal to social escapism without bringing a blush to the cheek of Morality, and is made to seem yet alive.” See The Laughing Tradition: Stage Comedy in Garrick’s Day (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980), 93.
I believe I make myself appear more wicked than I really am. For damn me, if I do not feel more Satisfaction in the Thoughts of restoring you to my Friend, than I could have Pleasure in any Favour your Bounty could have bestow’d. (44)

Ranger’s tomcat ways are a long way from exemplary, but Hoadly has no interest in punishing his womanizing rake. His satire is directed at Strictland, in whose character, Foote explains, “the Author has designed to ridicule the Folly and Absurdity of Suspicion.” Strictland is not a thoughtless brute: from the outset, he abuses himself liberally for his inability to control his suspicions, and the presumption is that the do-better wrist-slapping he gets will encourage him to behave more reasonably. The audience members are invited to apply the lesson to themselves. The medicine is mild, presented with plenty of sugar-coating in a cheery tone.

The tidy division between satire and sentiment works badly for many of these plays, whose authors tend to indulge in sentiment even where they also (gently) mock its excesses. Goldsmith’s best-known play is his mistaken-identity farce, She Stoops to Conquer (1773), which centers upon the havoc wreaked when the mischievous Tony Lumpkin tricks two travelers (Marlow and Hastings) into believing that his stepfather’s house is really an inn. Eventually the prank is exposed, Marlow and Hastings win the girls they came to court, and Tony learns that he is of age. The principal satiric target is Mrs. Hardcastle, Tony’s over-indulgent mother—but in the all-is-forgiven atmosphere of the play’s ending, she is brought back within the family circle, unpunished for her bad judgment. She Stoops to Conquer ridicules sentimental absurdities, especially in Hastings’s courtship of Kate Hardcastle, but Goldsmith heavily emphasizes the central importance of good nature. He is, as Hume points out, “glad to have his cake and eat it too.” So is Hugh Kelly, whose False Delicacy (1768) makes plain the folly of excessive

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75 Foote felt compelled to remark on the lenient treatment of Ranger: “The amiable Light in which this Character appears, will, I am afraid, draw many a Templar into troublesome Scrapes. I have now no less than ten Friends, since the Appearance of Ranger, who are under Prosecutions for ravishing Kisses from Girls in the Street, and beating the Watch: It is therefore, necessary to let these sprightly Boys know, that these are not the Particulars of Ranger’s Character that procure our Regard; we are only tempted to overlook these Blemishes in his Conduct, on the score of some amiable Beauties.” The Roman and English Comedy Consider’d and Compar’d. With Remarks on the Suspicous Husband. And an Examen into the Merit of the present Comic Actors (1747), 29-30.
76 Foote, The Roman and English Comedy, 27.
77 Hume, Rakish Stage, 349.
sentimentalism: all the problems of the play are brought about by the reticence and restraint caused by the characters’ “delicacy.” Nevertheless, the tone of False Delicacy is patently sentimental, and Kelly clearly appreciates finer feelings. His have-it-both-ways attitude is captured nicely by one of the play’s voices of reason: “Well, the devil take this delicacy; I don’t know any thing it does besides making people miserable:—And yet some how, foolish as it is, one can’t help liking it” (20). Goldsmith’s The Good-Natur’d Man (1768), like False Delicacy, mocks a virtue taken to such extremes that it becomes a liability. Whereas Kelly ridicules behavior, however, Goldsmith’s sights are on character. Young Honeywood’s indiscriminate charity—he gives to all who ask—gets him into trouble, and earns him a rather severe chastisement at the end of the play. Too severe, in fact: Honeywood is so decent and likeable that the satire does not work terribly well. With different degrees of pathos and humor, these comedies supply happy resolutions achieved through good nature triumphant.

The satire of most of these plays focuses on the minor failings of ultimately benevolent characters, and the object is usually some combination of pleasing entertainment and instruction. We are closer to the world of Tom Jones than to that of The Modern Husband—targets are well-meaning and educable, and the scolding is light. The central character of Richard Cumberland’s phenomenally successful The West Indian (1771) is the hot-headed and imprudent but compassionate Belcour, who like Young Honeywood is simply too good for this world. After the death of old Belcour (whom he thinks is his father), Belcour leaves Jamaica for London, where he is greeted by Stockwell, his real father (who does not reveal his paternity, wanting to test his son’s character). He immediately falls for Louisa Dudley, but while pursuing her he learns of the financial distress of an officer (who turns out to be her father, Captain Dudley), to whom he gives £200 (29). When he later discovers that the man he helped is the father of his heart’s desire, he decides he will not try for the girl, lest his actions be misinterpreted: “it shall never be said of me, that I took advantage of the father’s necessities to trepan the daughter” (46).

78 Bevis concludes that Goldsmith’s “emphasis falls more on benevolence than on imprudence. . . . When [Honeywood] talks in the last scene of perceiving his errors and receives righteous rebukes, we feel uneasy at his contrition and the self-righteousness of his rebukers. He has not done wrong, merely too much indiscriminate right” (The Laughing Tradition, 203).
Belcour’s goodness makes him a prey to the devious Fulmers; the other villain of the play, Lady Rusport, contrives to cheat Charles Dudley out of his inheritance, a scheme which is foiled by the honest O’Flaherty. In the end, the Fulmers are punished and Lady Rusport exposed; Charles receives his inheritance and gets the girl he wants to marry; Belcour and Louisa unite; Stockwell reveals himself as Belcour’s father, warmly praising his son for having “a heart beaming with benevolence, an animated nature, fallible indeed, but not incorrigible” (102).

*The West Indian* is a distributive justice satire (à la *Tom Jones*) and a strongly moral play, as well as a very funny one. Like Fielding’s foundling, Cumberland’s scapegrace is impetuous and foolhardy, though upheld as a basically positive model. He is also educable, and capable of shame and self-reproach: “I know I’m tainted with a thousand faults,” he reflects, “sick of a thousand follies” (92). If his imperfections are affectionately satirized, they are also sharply distinguished from the very real vice of the Fulmers and Lady Rusport. Cumberland’s attitude toward his protagonist is more than merely lenient; he *likes* Belcour, and (Fielding-esque) he encourages his audience to respond with care: “Laugh, but despise him not, for on his lip / His errors lie; his heart can never trip” (prologue). And Belcour is not simply a Young Honeywood, but is a non-native, born of English stock but raised as a West Indian—yet he is an essentially exemplary character, and the Irish O’Flaherty is just as favorably presented. Cumberland is not only giving us more examples of tender-hearted scapegraces, he is extending the parameters of the distributive-justice satiric form by asking us to feel empathy and admiration for figures who are not “English.”

Like *The West Indian*, Richard Brinsley Sheridan’s *The School for Scandal* (1777; pub. 1780) features a benevolent hero (the big-hearted spendthrift, Charles Surface), a guardian-pretending-not-to-be (Sir Oliver), a virtuous young lady (Maria), and villains who attempt to use the hero’s goodness against him (Joseph Surface, Lady Sneerwell, and Snake). As in *The West Indian*, bad is punished (Joseph’s hypocrisy exposed) and merit rewarded (Charles and Maria get together). The other characters, Sir Peter and Lady Teazle, are decent but fallible people whose marriage is in difficulties until he relaxes his rigid treatment of his young wife and she abandons her naïve attempts to emulate the world of fashion.
Sheridan’s satire on scandal-mongering is pointed, and he does not pretend that Joseph and company will change their ugly ways. His high-spirited comedy is more negative than Cumberland’s, focusing more on the machinations of the bad guys than the psychology of the virtuous hero. For the present-day reader, Charles’s goodness and reclamation are a bit too pat, and the Teazles’ reconciliation seems too easy. The unflinching negativity of the presentation of the depraved characters, however, gives the play a tartness that few comedies of the time exhibit. Sheridan’s positive exemplars are essentially commonplaces of this quarter century, but the refusal to reform the villains gives *The School for Scandal* a genuinely wide range of distributive-justice results.

The satire in these social comedies is educative rather than punitive. The level of moral gravity varies—*The Suspicious Husband* is not *The West Indian*—but the satire tends to work by combining character critique and a spectrum of positive and sometimes negative examples. Most of the characters criticized have bad instincts (Young Honeywood’s imprudence, Belcour’s hot-headedness) which are overcome by innate goodness. There are important distinctions to be made among these plays. *The Suspicious Husband*’s psychological depth is slight, and the weight of the moral point not much; *False Delicacy* and *She Stoops to Conquer* are exemplary and reform-oriented, chastising folly without depicting serious vice; *The Good-Natur’d Man* presents the possibility of goodness taken advantage of, but *The West Indian* and *The School for Scandal* show real depravity. Joseph is not a scamp but a monster, and Sheridan makes no pretense of his reclaimability. The satiric point is educability, and the bad characters are those who are willfully malevolent as well as beyond redemption; the good characters represent not paragons but flawed human beings with whom the audience can identify. In assessing a play like *The West Indian*, we have to assume receptivity to teaching and example that is remote from modern patterns. Eighteenth-century play-goers evidently did, at least some of the time, appreciate the fact that they were being taught a lesson as well as being entertained.
Lightweight afterpiece entertainment

Afterpieces, farces, and short comedies are more overtly satirical than the mainpiece social comedies; they do not educate or correct but mock and expose. They tend to offer little in the way of character or plot development, instead featuring humours figures and situational comedy. With the exceptions of Foote’s and Macklin’s afterpieces (of which more in due course), most of these plays are either fluffy topical entertainments or slightly more substantial social satires.

The satire in these afterpieces is often scant. Garrick’s highly popular Miss in Her Teens (1747) is a rollicking two-act farce with a lot of zip but no sting whatever. Miss Biddy is in love with Captain Loveit but has been promised to his father (Simon) by her aunt. While the Captain is away in the wars, Biddy amuses herself by letting the blustering Flash and the foppish Fribble court her (the latter played by Garrick). When her beau returns, he frightens away the cowardly suitors, and Sir Simon wisely relinquishes his claim. That the Captain and Miss Biddy will attain their happily-ever-after ending is never in doubt. The enjoyment of the play comes entirely from the comical discomfiture of its “vap’ring bully” and “frib’ling fop.” Miss in Her Teens is entertainment, pure and simple. Garrick’s three-scene Lilliput (1756), like his earlier Lethe (1740; pub. 1745), is a gentle send-up of English manners and mores, this time set in fantasyland. “Lilliput” represents Francophilic England; in the fashionable Lady Flimnap, Garrick mocks the beau monde, while praising English virtue with marked irony. In The Guardian (1759), he does a sort of two-act comic preview of False Delicacy, exposing the folly of sentimentalism. In A Peep Behind the Curtain (1767), he ridicules the taste of the town for machines, burlettas, and other non-traditional forms; the nonsense-peddling author in this rehearsal-style play is tellingly named Glib, and one character laments the craze “for the pap and loplolly of our present writers” that is ruining the theatre (2:80). Garrick might have been riled at having to prostitute his talents with

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79 I am concerned here with satiric concept, not in the nature of the afterpiece as a dramatic form; Bevis makes distinctions among afterpiece modes (e.g., sentimental, mixed, and traditional/laughing) in chap. 13 of English Drama, and especially in chap. 6 of The Laughing Tradition.

such entertainments, and his attitude toward the “town” is often tart, but his satiric afterpieces are undoubtedly meant to be crowd-pleasers.

Some of the liveliest satiric afterpieces of the mid-century are travesties of sentimentalism. The most popular comic afterpiece of the sixties was George Colman the elder’s *Polly Honeycombe, A Dramatick Novel of one act* (1760), a snappy send-up of the vogue for sentiment in novels and plays. An antecedent to Sheridan’s Lydia Languish, Polly translates the commonplace events of her love life into the stuff of novelistic melodrama. Meeting the accountant to whom her parents intend to marry her, she affects distress: “What a monster of a man!—What will the frightful creature say to me?—I am now, for all the world, just in the situation of poor Clarissa” (13). Rejecting the accountant as an insufficiently romantic suitor, she congratulates herself: “This would make an excellent chapter in a new Novel.—But here comes Papa—in a violent passion, no doubt.—No matter—It will only furnish materials for the next chapter” (18). *Polly Honeycombe* is light and bright, chirpily ridiculing Polly, her parents, the suitor, and Scribble (her true inamorato). This is a comic debunking of a popular craze, singularly lacking in judgment or bite. Colman scored another hit in *The Deuce is in Him* (1763), a two-act farce satirizing platonic love. The self-proclaimed sentimentalist Colonel Tamper decides to test the devotion of his dearest by pretending to have lost a leg and an eye in battle. She discovers his plot and shames him, and he is duly mortified: “I see my absurdity,” he laments, “all I wish is to be laughed at, and forgiven” (43). Like *Polly Honeycombe*, *The Deuce is in Him* is full of joie de vivre and not trying for pointed critique. Other comic satires on this theme include Foote’s *The Devil Upon Two Sticks* (1768; pub. 1778) and William Whitehead’s *A Trip to Scotland* (1770), as well as Garrick’s *A Peep Behind the Curtain*. In afterpieces like these, the audience can laugh at the people whose silliness is shown up. Insofar as this is “satire,” it is designed to make viewers and readers feel comfortably superior to characters they need not dislike.

The afterpieces of Arthur Murphy include more topical satire, and, while his métier is farce, he does seem to want to use them as vehicles for varyingly sharp social commentary. Most of these works target standard types or social follies. *The Upholsterer, or, What News?* (1758) mocks the foibles of the
ridiculous but amiable Quidnunc, who ignores his domestic life in his zealous pursuit of political news, and those of the humours characters who surround him (e.g., Pamphlet, Razor, and Termagant). The piece is straight farce. In one scene, Razor (the barber) leaves a half-shaven butler in his chair so that he can report to Quidnunc: the butler did not say anything, Razor exclaims, but he looked “Full of thought,” he says, and “there’s something at the bottom, when a great Man’s Butler looks grave” (13). The Old Maid (1761) harshly ridicules its target, the vain Miss Harlow, who dismisses her betrothed when she fancies herself desired by a younger man, and The Citizen (also 1761) is an equally abrasive attack on the merchant class, but in both plays the severity of the satire is appreciably mitigated by the roistering tone of farce.

A more intense satire is What we must All come to (1764), in which Murphy disparages the pretensions of middle-class social climbers as well as the haut monde. As part of his criticism of the high life, he exposes the emptiness of mercenary marriage: the Druggets marry off one daughter to the wealthy Sir Charles Rackett, and plan to unite their daughter Nancy to another aristocrat. They abandon that scheme—sanctioning the match between Nancy and her true love, a commoner—after witnessing the Racketts’ troubled domestic life. Sir Charles and Lady Rackett quarrel at length over the card played in a recent game (e.g., “Po! po! ridiculous! the club was the card against the world” [21]). When he stomps out in a temper, the servant Dimity cracks, “the whole house is in an uproar. . . . A rare proof of the happiness they enjoy in high life” (24). The tone of the play is at times farcical—the diamond vs. club controversy is hard to take seriously—but the social commentary is decidedly cynical. Pride, vanity, and the endless strife among people of fashion is, Dimity wryly observes, “the way of the world now” (2). Murphy clearly wants to offer substantive commentary of a kind hard to make effective in the afterpiece form, but these works do represent a type of social critique far removed from Garrick’s toothless entertainments and Colman’s sunny presentation of basically likeable people.

81 What we must All come to was damned immediately (for political and personal reasons?). See Howard Hunter Dunbar, The Dramatic Career of Arthur Murphy (New York: Modern Language Association, 1946), 164-72. The play was revived (with moderate success) as Marriage a-la-Mode in 1767 and as Three Weeks After Marriage in 1776.
The afterpiece form does not allow for much character development, and neither Murphy nor his contemporaries use afterpieces for moral commentary or reformation. As Kinservik points out, audiences are invited to judge rather than to sympathize with the characters presented in these plays—making afterpiece satire markedly different from that found in full-length social comedy. As in social comedies, there is a considerable spectrum of possibilities. *Lilliput* is not *Polly Honeycombe*, and neither has much to do with *What we must All come to*. The majority of the satiric mainpieces I have been discussing actively promote a positive vision of human nature, appealing to basic educability and reclaimability. Afterpiece writers mostly invite easy judgment of an obvious, non-threatening target, or they are content to provide frivolous entertainment in response to which serious judgment is unnecessary. The principal mid-century afterpiece dramatists, however, are Foote and Macklin, who differ from their contemporaries and from each other.

**Samuel Foote**

The foremost dramatic satirist of this quarter century is Samuel Foote, who touted himself as the “English Aristophanes” and whose contemporaries regarded him—reverentially, worriedly, or resentfully—as the age’s most fearsome “satyrist.” His reputation is for boldness and controversy. He audaciously mimicked recognizable individuals and feuded with literary celebrities; he lost his leg in a horse-riding accident and then wrote parts for himself to accommodate the injury (e.g., Sir Luke Limp); his on-stage antics inspired Dr. Johnson to grumble that impersonation would meet reprisal; and in the last years of his life he was wrongly tried for sodomy. Some satire scholars allude to the “English Aristophanes” in their accounts, but the plays themselves get scant attention. Foote tends to be regarded as an anomaly, a

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82 Kinservik, *Disciplining Satire*, 128.
83 Boswell quotes Johnson as saying, in 1775, “I am told Foote means to *take me off*, as he calls it, and I am determined the fellow shall not do it with impunity”; *Boswell’s Life of Johnson*, ed. George Birkbeck Hill, revised and enlarged by L. F. Powell, 6 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934), 2:299.

punitive satirist in a period awash with sentiment and sympathy. The atypicality is true enough, but the conception of Foote as scurrilous Aristophanic scourge (an image he worked to create) has little to do with most of his output.

Foote is, among other things, an entertainer. One of his earliest ventures, *Taste* (1751), is a brisk-moving satire on social foibles—namely, the antiquarian craze, the aristocratic dilettanti, and the inanity of the fashionable world’s pursuit of “taste.” The plot is slight. Puff the auctioneer and Carmine the painter are gulling the town, selling rubbish as antiques to a credulous crowd. Puff capitalizes on his victims’ absurdity with obvious good cheer: “Praise be to Folly and Fashion, there are, in this Town, *Dupes* enough to gratify the Avarice of us all” (4). Carmine is less tolerant, finding their debased taste and vanity despicable. While painting Lady Pentweazle, he exposes and indulges her egotism; she revels in his flattery, but his distaste is evident. The main targets of Act II are Lord Dupe and Novice, who fancy themselves connoisseurs but who neither care about art nor know how to appreciate it. In the auction scene, Puff is revealed as a fraud and then betrayed by Carmine. Rather than bowing and scraping before the indignant dilettanti, however, he assumes the moral high ground, rebuking Carmine and then lashing the town: “I own I have been a Cheat, and I glory in it. But what Point will you Virtuosi, you Connoisseurs, gain by the Detection? Will not the publishing of our Crimes trumpet forth your Folly?” (31) Though a rascal, Puff is also the voice of reason, and we delight in seeing his victims warmly scolded. But *Taste* is not a moralizing play. Foote knows that nothing is going to change the world he describes, and he does not invite much concern about that fact. As in *The Patron* (1764), his lightweight exposé is the stuff of entertainment, not preachment.

Foote never goes in for sermonizing, but elsewhere he eschews generalized commentary for more pointed ridicule. *The Minor* (1760) is his most famous play, a biting attack on Methodists and on George Whitefield in particular. The plot is largely irrelevant, functioning mostly as a vehicle for Foote’s mimicry and satire. Sir William Wealthy and his brother Richard quarrel over their differing methods for educating their children; Sir William conspires to cheat his wayward son George of his fortune in order (he claims) to teach him prudence; Richard has disowned his daughter Lucy after she refused to marry the
man he chose for her. In his scheme against George, Sir William enlists the aid of a fast-talking mimic, Samuel Shift—a role meant both as a jibe at Tate Wilkinson and a spectacular vehicle for Foote, who has Shift imitate a lawyer, a linkboy, an auctioneer, a usurer, and finally Squintum (the Whitefield figure) in the course of a short play. George is a recognizable type in mid-century drama, a full-blooded but well-meaning young man. When he encounters Lucy with the bawd Mother Cole, he believes her to be a prostitute and inquires about price; she tearfully recounts her sad story, and he resolves to rescue her: “For tho’ I can’t boast of my own goodness, yet I have an honest feeling for afflicted virtue” (80). In the end, Lucy is welcomed home by her father; George is praised and rewarded by Sir William; and the two young cousins unite to everyone’s immense satisfaction. The bathetic denouement smacks of sentimentalism, but the characters are undeveloped and their story of little consequence. The point of The Minor is its satire, especially its ridicule of Mother Cole, a Methodist convert who sees no conflict between her newfound zeal and her dissolute way of life. The harlot (also played by Foote) reveals the superficiality of the “saving grace” offered by Squintum’s doctrine, and in the epilogue Foote savagely mocks Whitefield as a fraud and a bigot. The satire on Methodism and “false” religion more broadly is undeniable—but does The Minor represent the Aristophanic scourge at the height of his powers?

Foote undoubtedly viewed Whitefield as a villainous cheat, and his ridicule is certainly meant to wound, but the Methodists were easy targets; they felt “scourged,” but most of Foote’s audience would have seen The Minor’s satire as non-controversial. As Kinservik has argued, the play nicely illustrates the discrepancy between Foote’s self-presentation and the actual content of his satire. In the introductory dialogue with Canker and Smart, Foote has Canker warn him off deriding the itinerant preachers of this religion (“Have a care. Dangerous ground. Ludere cum sacris, you know”), in response to which he

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84 As Simon Trefman argues, Mother Cole’s “jumbling of both worlds gives the impression that the Methodists would allow anyone into their church who professed belief; that Methodists preached piety but did not let religion interfere with business; that personal spiritual experiences were frauds” and so on. See Sam. Foote, Comedian, 1720-1777 (New York: New York University Press, 1971), 113.

85 The Methodists had many opponents, and some satires against them are more heated than Foote’s. Evan Lloyd’s The Methodist (1766) is a sober, heated verse attack on Methodism that takes its subject much more seriously than Foote does.
flaunts his satiric intrepidity: “I must beg leave to assert, that ridicule is the only antidote against this pernicious poison” (8, 9). Foote claims a devil-may-care attitude, Kinservik concludes, but the satire of the play is hardly risky enough to warrant such declarations: “Ridiculing Methodists in 1760 was neither dangerous nor original. By suggesting it was, Foote is not appearing as himself; instead, he is trying to make himself appear a certain way.”

This is not to say that Foote’s satire went uncontested. *The Minor* was hotly condemned in a number of angry pamphlets, but, as L. W. Conolly concludes, Foote’s anti-Methodist satire “reflected the prevailing mood of the government in 1760, and so received the backing of the Lord Chamberlain.” Foote did have to make concessions to the opposition, including a substantial revision of the epilogue, but the point of the censorship was evidently to diminish the personal attack on Whitefield rather than to weaken the anti-Methodism. What *The Minor* provided for contemporary theatre-goers must have been an impressive display of Foote’s talents as a mimic and a spirited assault on a widely disliked group.

Whatever his self-projected image as fearless Aristophanic satirist, Foote devotes a lot of energy to ridiculing standard butts—that is, safe targets. *The Englishman in Paris* (1753) mocks both English Francophilia and the churlish Buck’s unreflective hostility of all things French; the play ends with his being told he cannot marry the virtuous Lucinda until he abandons his errant ways. In the sequel, *The Englishman return’d from Paris* (1756), Buck returns to his homeland more beastly than ever, a loud-mouthed Francophile who disdains English customs, pals around with his imported cohort of French fops, and refuses to marry Lucinda. After the French fashion, he proposes to keep her as a mistress instead. She retaliates by convincing him that she has poisoned his tea and that death is upon him. In return for

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86 Kinservik, *Disciplining Satire*, 150.
88 As Kinservik rightly concludes, “With the excision of the epilogue in the Drury Lane production, *The Minor* featured no mimicry of Whitefield and only incidental mimicry of other people. . . . For most theatregoers, *The Minor* was another of Foote’s plays that had a reputation for Aristophanic exposure of real people, but that had very little in the way of dragging actual miscreants before an audience for judgment” (*Disciplining Satire*, 151).
the “antidote,” he agrees to relinquish her part of his deceased father’s fortune; he is made to cast off his French trappings, and she is rid of a foppish swine. The play advocates English patriotism, and Foote dispenses poetic justice—but the “Englishman” works are very much in line with popular themes and motifs of the mid-century. In *The Lyar* (1762; pub. 1764), Foote takes passing shots at Methodists, Grub Street hacks, theatrical players, and Francophiles; the title refers to Young Wilding, a compulsive yarn-spinner around whom the thin plot revolves. The piece is featherlight, as is *The Mayor of Garratt* (1763; pub. 1769), which ridicules Methodists again, as well as country politics, soldiers, the trials of marriage, and the fickleness and credulity of the mob. Based on a real-life mock-election held annually in Garrat, the play is a farce about a farce, full of incisive jabs but buoyantly insubstantial.89 None of these afterpieces includes a challenge to the status quo, and neither do they have much in the way of sharp-tongued scourging.

The liveliest satiric venture in Foote’s varied output is *The Handsome Housemaid, or, Piety in Pattens* (1773; not published until 1973),90 a high-energy playlet debunking sentimentalism. Foote parodies Isaac Bickerstaff’s *The Maid of the Mill* (1765), a dramatic version of Richardson’s *Pamela*. Channeling the irreverence of *Shamela*, he narrates the trial of Polly Pattens’s “virtue.” Polly is the “handsome housemaid” of Squire Turniptop’s estate, pressed by the Squire to accompany him to London. She almost relents, until Thomas the Butler warns her that Turniptop means to assail her virtue. Horrified, she rejects the Squire’s offer, at which point he—convinced of her piety—pledges his love and offers, presumably in seriousness, to marry her. A delighted Polly rejoices (“& shall Virtue be rewarded at last? it shall”), and then, remembering that this fortunate turn owes itself to Thomas, she resolves to

89 Another example is *The Knights* (1754), whose slight plot is secondary to the spoofing of Sir Penurious Trifle and Sir Gregory Gazette; neither character appears in the play, but both are impersonated by the hero, Hartop, played by Foote. Foote claims in the preface to have based these figures on people he met on “a summer’s expedition,” but as Kinservik points out, his “assertion of personal satire seems designed more to lend his cardboard characters a sense of realism than to indicate Aristophanic satire” (*Displining Satire*, 145).

90 *Piety in Pattens* is extant as Larpent MS no. 346 and Folger MS D.a.48. It was printed by Samuel N. Bogorad and Robert Gale Noyes in *Samuel Foote’s Primitive Puppet-Shew Featuring Piety in Pattens: A Critical Edition*, published as a special issue of *Theatre Survey* 14 (1973), no. 1a. All quotations are from this edition, cited parenthetically in the text.
wed him instead. Ever the gallant, he refuses: “never, never. you desarve the Squire for presarving your
Vartue, & he desarves you by knowing how to reward it. be happy together” (34-35). Turniptop too
proves himself noble: touched by the “dignified Sentiments” expressed by “these poor people,” he
encourages their union and promises to settle ten pounds a year on them. Not to be outdone in delicacy,
Polly forswears them both: “I cannot purfur one without afflicting the other. Justice & Gratitude therefore
demand as I must not have both, to take—neither” (35). By August 1773 *Piety in Pattens* was being done
by living players, but in its original form it was part of *The Primitive Puppet-Shew*, done with hand
puppets to underscore the unreality of the sentimentalism. Foote’s theme is familiar enough, but his wit
and concision give especial energy to this fizzy demolition.

Foote’s eighteenth-century and modern reputation as the English Aristophanes has to do not with
his social/cultural satire but with his on-stage mimicry of recognizable people. A crucial point needs to
be made: Foote’s game was not to feature these figures as characters in the plays, but to create roles for
himself that he could perform as the person he meant to mimic. This is improvisation for the pleasure of
the audience, and not at all evident from the text itself; the satiric thrust is exclusively part of the
production. The best example of this phenomenon is *The Author* (1757), a play which tells of a long-
absent father’s return to London, where he discovers that his son Cape, an impecunious writer, is a man of
virtue. He thereupon reveals his paternity and his fortune, making possible the son’s marriage to the
sister of Cadwallader, who had rejected Cape as a suitor because of his poverty. Foote satirizes the plight
of true artists (etc.), but the on-stage satiric bite came from the mimicry of the real-life John Apreece, a
well-known eccentric, in Foote’s performance of Cadwallader. A writer in 1777 suggested that Apreece
had encouraged Foote’s representation: “Ap---ce was so much resolved that his own character should be
known in that of Cadwallader, that he lent the mimic a suit of cloaths he had been very conspicuous in at
court.” The story seems unlikely, given that *The Author* was suppressed in 1758, probably because of

pressure from Apreece. Conolly ventures a tentative explanation: Apreece “had no objections . . . until he realized that he had become a public laughingstock,” widely associated with the clown Cadwallader.92

In *The Orators* (1762), Foote tried mimicry embedded in a different kind of satiric vehicle. This plotless revue mocks Thomas Sheridan’s London oratory, the Dublin publisher George Faulkner, the Cock Lane Ghost affair, the amateur debating club known as the Robin-Hood Society, Methodists, and a number of other well-known episodes and stock butts. Faulkner took offence and sued Foote for libel—what gave edge to this ephemeral, topical revue was the on-stage mimicry.93 The victims of Foote’s impersonations, unnamed in the plays, would have been perfectly obvious to most of the audience members. The ridicule was more likely a matter of entertainment than correction or animus-driven deflation, but in any case his mimicry represents a type of pointed personal satire very different from the standard-pattern social comedy or toothless divertissements done by many of his contemporaries.

Foote’s satires also tend to reflect a much less sunny view of human nature than is common in this quarter century. His early plays do not exactly celebrate good nature: actively positive characters are rare, and are not very convincing when present; George Wealthy and Lucy in *The Minor* are basically cardboard conveniences. Foote is never a jolly optimist, but his vision darkens markedly late in his career. *The Nabob* (1772; pub. 1778) is a severe satiric portrait of the nabob (Sir Matthew Mite) “in his various roles as vulgar materialist, *nouveau riche* antiquarian and unprincipled destroyer of families.”94 At the start of the play, Sir Matthew has contrived to get the decent Sir John Oldham into his debt for a huge sum of money (roughly ten thousand pounds) and has demanded that Oldham either give him Sophy Oldham’s hand in marriage or lose his estate. Sir Matthew’s callousness is amply demonstrated throughout the play. He routinely behaves with cold inhumanity in his pursuit of wealth and his exercise of power. Sir John’s brother is the hero of the play, paying off the debt, saving Sir John’s estate, and making possible a union between his son and Sophy. The ending is satisfactory enough for the Oldhams,

93 See Kinservik, *Disciplining Satire*, 152-55.
94 Bevis, *The Laughing Tradition*, 166.
but the truly villainous Sir Matthew is not punished, and his preying on defenseless families will clearly continue. Foote does not pretend that the threat and the social evil he represents—an increasingly visible group of nabobs in late eighteenth-century England—is anything but very real. In this play, as in *The Maid of Bath* (1771; pub. 1775?) and *The Bankrupt* (1773; pub. 1776), the imposition of a too-easy resolution only serves “to reveal the powerlessness of Foote’s ‘good’ characters,” and the villains are incapable of shame. Foote does not force-feed negativity in these satires, but their implications are grim.

Foote’s output is very badly explained as the audacious attacks of “the English Aristophanes.” He is sometimes lightweight, and the degree to which the audience cares about the satiric punishment of (say) Lord Dupe in *Taste* or Buck in *The Englishman return’d from Paris* is minimal. When he is more pointedly antagonistic, he is hardly playing the role of defiantly transgressive satirist. He ridicules Methodists, Francophiles, social upstarts, and other common and uncontroversial targets. Foote has great range. *Taste* is an entertaining spoof; *Piety in Pattens* is stingingly funny; *The Minor* includes biting satire on standard butts; the zing in *The Author* derives largely from recognizable personation; *The Orators* is a scatter-shot satirical revue wholly without plot; and the harsh social satire of *The Nabob* makes that play much darker than Foote’s earlier ventures. These works represent very different types of satiric enterprise, whatever his tendencies toward mimicry and topical hits. What is consistent in his oeuvre is the absence of a desire to change things. Foote sometimes seems cheerfully resigned to aimless mockery, as of the dilettanti in *Taste* or of the sentimental vogue in *Piety in Pattens*. When what he is ridiculing are social foibles or personal eccentricities, he seems neither to expect change nor to be all that bothered by unchangeability. In his later plays, he satirizes not folly but vice, and he is manifestly more

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95 Says Elizabeth N. Chatten: the quasi-sentimental ending is “more than counterbalanced . . . by the play’s revelation of the political and financial machinations of a powerful new group in English society,” and whatever the play’s softer bits, Foote “is overwhelmingly concerned with characters and activities which illustrate the rapaciousness of man.” See *Samuel Foote* (Boston: Twayne, 1980), 104-05.

96 Chatten, *Samuel Foote*, 109. Even as early as *The Commissary* (1765)—a satire on war profiteers and on the *nouveau riche*—Foote’s view of society is manifestly dark. And while the characters in *The Lame Lover* (1770) are sufficiently under-developed to make them not very real, Foote’s satire has unpleasant implications. As Kinservik rightly concludes, “*The Lame Lover* explores the native corruption of English law and ends without punishing or correcting the satiric targets: England is just as bad a place as Foote found it” (*Disciplining Satire*, 158).
troubled by his own sense that vice is the way of the world. Plays like *The Nabob* and *The Bankrupt* are not particularly funny, even if they are not oppressively dark. Like Gay, Foote is philosophically sour even when he manages to be tonally light. He is an entertainer, a commercial playwright eager and able to please the crowd, but his view of human nature makes his satire much less positive than that of most of his contemporaries.

*Charles Macklin*

Macklin’s interests and impulses are very different from Foote’s, but, like Foote, he is a commercial comic playwright with little faith in the innate goodness of humankind. Macklin’s satire can be sharp; he is prepared to punish and to provoke thought; his comedies are hard-nosed and pointedly unsentimental.

Macklin’s early plays are biting satiric afterpieces. The first of these, *A Will and No Will: or, A Bone for the Lawyers* (1746), is a condensed version of Regnard’s five-act *Le Legataire universel* (1708); Macklin tightens the plot and adds significant satiric edge in his revision. Sir Isaac Skinflint is an elderly valetudinarian who wants to disinherit his nephew Bellair and to take Bellair’s fiancée, Harriet Lovewealth, for himself. Sir Isaac’s servant, Shark, contrives to foil his scheme, motivated not by devotion to Bellair or by a sense of justice but by sheer self-interest. Impersonating a dying Sir Isaac, Shark has the lawyer draw up a will in which Bellair and Harriet can marry and the loyal servant is rewarded with a princely cut of the fortune. Sir Isaac soon discovers the scam and sets up a squawk, but ultimately he realizes that the will is legally binding and is left unreconciled to the others. Skinflint is sufficiently slimy that we are not much bothered by his distress, but the conniving Bellair and the gold-digging Harriet are not exactly the sympathetic lovers of romance comedy, and the malevolent Shark is altogether lacking in charm. *A Will and No Will* is a racy farce with a lot of humor, but the satire is cutting and the world it reflects mostly bad. *The Fortune Hunters* (1748), Robert R. Findlay argues, is yet

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97 *A Will and No Will* was published in the Augustan Reprint series, along with *The New Play Criticiz’d, or The Plague of Envy*, with an introduction by Jean B. Kern (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, 1967).
more caustic—a “biter bit” play in which two knavish fortune-seekers make what they believe to be lucrative matches only to discover that their wives are whores; the women are just as deceived, having taken the beaux for men of status. The play ends with all four under lock and key. Unlike most of his playwright contemporaries, Macklin is not amused by what he describes. What he is doing is not affectionate critique of a fallible exemplar; his world is populated by cheats and rogues and very short of shining models.

Macklin’s most successful afterpiece was Love à la Mode (1759; pub. 1779), a less wholly negative play. Charlotte Goodchild’s four suitors are a proud and censorious Scotsman (Sir Archy Macsarcasm), a narcissistic Jew (Beau Mordecai), an improvident English squire (Squire Groom), and the bashful Irish soldier (Sir Callaghan O’Brallaghan). The first three are interested only in Charlotte’s money, and when she and her father feign bankruptcy, they all find reasons to decamp, disinclined to wed a penniless girl. Callaghan reaffirms his love and is handsomely rewarded with Charlotte and her fortune. The play ends with the scoundrels disappointed, aware that they have been duped, and the noble Sir Callaghan exultant: Love à la Mode is distributive justice satire of a highly entertaining sort, tailor-made for the mid-century London crowd. As in Foote’s The Minor, however, Macklin’s point is not plot but satiric deflation. The denouement “hints of sentimentalism,” Findlay concludes, but the “focus throughout is on the bitingly satiric characterizations” of the mercenary suitors.

Macsarcasm thoroughly exposes himself, and Macklin apes the Scottish dialect (“Ah! ye leuk like a deveenety”), and the other two rascals are both liberally mocked. The happy union of Charlotte and Callaghan makes Love à la Mode less acerbic than Macklin’s earlier afterpieces, though it is not particularly cheerful. In

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98 No Larpent MS of this play exists, as Findlay points out, but there are two largely identical pirated printings of 1750. My discussion is indebted to Findlay, “The Comic Plays of Charles Macklin: Dark Satire at Mid-Eighteenth Century,” Educational Theatre Journal 20 (1968): 398-407, at 401-02.

99 That the Irish Callaghan is the hero of the play is no surprise. Macklin’s most famous celebration of the Irish spirit—at the expense of English manners—is The True-Born Irishman (1762; pub. 1683), in which he savagely mocks the Anglophilia of Mrs. O’Dogherty, who changes her name to “Diggerty.”


the last scene, the remaining suitors do not lament their misbehavior or admit that justice has been done: they plot against Charlotte, wanting vengeance (“I will write a satire upon her,” says Mordecai, and Squire Groom threatens to “poison her parrot” [77]). Callaghan is a decent chap and the Goodchilds are likeable enough (if bland), but the satiric targets are incapable of shame or real correction.102

Macklin’s two full-length comedies represent very different types of serious satire. *The School for Husbands, or the Married Libertine* (1761; not pub. in the eighteenth century) is an errant-husband reform play whose seriousness is hard to determine. Lord Belville is a Member of Parliament and a pleasure-seeking philanderer governed by his passions rather than by his conscience: “wives and moralists may preach up what they will,” he coolly remarks, “but variety is nature’s prime bliss” (137). Pretending to be an upstanding Staffordshire gentleman named Jackson, he attempts to seduce Harriet, who, smelling a rat, pretends to be Miss Margery Packington, “a raw, ignorant, unexperienced, country thing” (144). Harriet, Lady Belville, and the other characters plot not only to expose Lord Belville but to make him suffer. Harriet resists him on the grounds that extra-marital sex is sinful, and at the end of Act II he signs a fake contract asserting that the two of them are united in a “marriage in conscience” (152). She feigns trust in him, and he excitedly prepares for conquest. At the start of Act III, however, Harriet informs her would-be seducer of the arrival of her brother—a violent rakehell back from America, who will be none too pleased to find a man attempting to deflower his sister. What follows is a succession of punishments. The brother (really Angelica in disguise) duly appears and bullies Belville, who is bound, gagged, roughed up, told that he is being hauled off to America to fight with Cherokees, and then made to think that his wife has cuckolded him, at which point he has borne all he can bear: “I am bewildered, and know not where I am—lost in a labyrinth of shame: each step brings new perplexities and disgrace.”

102 Two of Macklin’s mid-century afterpieces are more particularized. *The New Play Criticiz’d, or The Plague of Envy* (1747; not pub. until the twentieth century) is a response to Hoadly’s *The Suspicious Husband*; Macklin ridicules Hoadly’s detractors, though he seems to be mocking Hoadly’s play as well: “Most of the play’s supporters are fools, but all of its opponents are knaves,” says Bevis, who suggests that Macklin “was too shrewd to oppose the public’s choice openly if he disagreed with it” (*The Laughing Tradition*, 131). The other afterpiece is *Covent Garden Theatre, or Pasquin Turn’d Drawncansir* (1752; not pub. until the twentieth century), a scatter-shot attack on a number of particular playwrights and on a host of other social follies. The topicality was evidently objected to by the censor (Conolly, *The Censorship of English Drama*, 7).
In the final act, Belville pleads with his wife and she refuses to hear him, the “brother” reveals himself as merely a woman, Lady Belville apologizes for their severity, Belville begs forgiveness and—*mirabile dictu*—even blesses his tormenters: “It was your duty to check, to wound, to kill the vice that was assassinating your peace and my honour—and I thank you all, who have contributed to expose me to myself” (193).

Macklin’s plot has all the sentimental devices, but *The School for Husbands* is not a sentimental play. Kinservik argues that it represents a transition in Macklin’s career, a move from punitive to disciplinary satire. Whereas earlier pieces—like *A Will and No Will*—featured undeveloped characters and did not try to elicit sympathy, *The School for Husbands* includes more psychological realism and character development. “By 1761,” he concludes, “Macklin was no longer writing punitive satires that relied on a moral distance between the satiric target and the audience.”

I disagree. Comparing a full-length play to a two-act afterpiece in terms of character depth is a tricky matter, but in any case I have a hard time imagining Belville eliciting much sympathy from audience members, even on his knees. As Kinservik points out, Belville’s self-awareness of wrongdoing makes him all the more disturbing, and the extent of physical punishment and terror he has to suffer before his *volte face* is in itself telling. The protagonists of rake-reform plays often wax remorseful when their ladies say “for shame” or after some other relatively mild rebuke—but Belville’s contrition comes only after a night of hellish abuse. Neither of these reformations is plausible; Macklin’s stated desire “to mend a vicious age” notwithstanding, the conversion of Belville does not convince.

Macklin clearly recognizes that one of the expectations for mid-century satiric comedy is to “Teach by example” (prologue; 127, 128), but *The School for Husbands* does not seem genuinely educational. To feature a good-hearted scapegrace brought back in line by the love of a virtuous woman or by his own shame is one thing; to depict an unscrupulous libertine terrorized

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103 Kinservik, *Disciplining Satire*, 183.
104 “Fear seems psychologically inadequate as a motive for renewed love and lasting reform in a man ‘infatuated with the itch of intrigue,’ but the plot requires a resolution, and Macklin, after all the ‘probing to the quick,’ is content with a conversion under duress” (Bevis, *The Laughing Tradition*, 134-35).
into promising reformation is quite another. Macklin does not ask us to sympathize with this rogue; he invites us to enjoy his richly deserved punishment.

Macklin’s most trenchant satire is *The Man of the World* (1681; pub. 1685), an acid attack on political venality and corruption. He does not even pretend that his villain is reclaimable. The gist of the action is this: Sir Hector Maccrafty, a nasty-tempered, power-seeking Scot, has disowned one son because of liberal tendencies and wants to marry the other one to Lady Rodolpha, the daughter of Lord Lumbercourt, in the hopes that such a union will raise his own social and political status. Macklin’s play was performed in Dublin as *The True-born Scotchman* in 1764. His attempt to stage it in London met with official resistance; the play was refused a license in 1770 and again in 1779. The objections are not surprising. As Findlay explains, in the original Macklin’s satiric thrust was directed at “the numerous Scottish politicians and place-seekers who thronged to London in the 1760s under the patronage of the Scottish Earl of Bute. . . . The play is fraught with slaps at Parliament, the Ministry, and the Court Party.”

Macklin revised substantially after both denials. Sir Hector became Sir Pertinax Macsycophant, “no longer merely a topical sketch of a self-seeking follower of Bute, but a perennial portrait of a greedy and hypocritical politician.” Macklin also significantly toned down the topical satire on the Scotch, the court party, political candor, and so on.

Whatever Macklin’s modifications, the satire is unrelentingly harsh and the tone icily cynical. The central conflict is between the unscrupulous Sir Pertinax and Egerton, his incorruptible son. A violently anti-English bigot, Sir Pertinax upbraids his Briton-at-heart son for being “nai true Scot” (218). He offers to forgive Egerton’s past misconduct, provided the latter will speak publicly for a measure Sir Pertinax supports, but Egerton’s refusal is principled and accusatory: “you would connect me

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107 One of the excised passages (which Bartley includes in brackets) is Sir Pertinax’s call for Scottish solidarity: “Sir, Scotchmen—Scotchmen, sir—wherever they meet throughout the globe—should unite and stick together, as it were in a poleetecal phalanx. Sir, the whole world hates us, and therefore we should loove yean anaither” (219).
with men I despise, and press me into measures I abhor; would make me a devoted slave to selfish leaders, who have no friendship but in faction—no merit but in corruption—nor interest in any measure, but their own—and to such men I cannot submit.” His appeal to conscience shocks his father, who schools him in the ways of the political world: “Conscience, quotha? I hai been in Parliament these three and thratty years, and never heard the tarm made use of before—sir, it is an unparliamentary word, and ye wull be laughed at for it” (250). Egerton stands his ground, and in the end he unites with his true love, as does Lady Rodolopha (whose beau turns out to be Sir Pertinax’s other son). The play is not wholly without positives, but the obtrusive presence of the unregenerate Sir Pertinax (played by Macklin) is mood darkening. The stridency of Macklin’s political satire is exceptional in this quarter century, and he makes perfectly clear the fact that the villain is beyond redemption, the corruption he represents irremediable. *The Man of the World* is a strikingly unsentimental and unfunny play.

The oddity in Macklin’s dramatic career is *The Spoild Child*, an incomplete play draft printed for the first time by Kinservik. 108 Determining the date is impossible, but Kinservik is probably right to suggest very late 1770s or early 1780s. The manuscript is not a coherent scene-by-scene draft but a set of working notes and plans, which sketch a fairly straightforward plot. The protagonist is the spoiled child of the title; his father is a soldier in the East Indies; his mother is over-indulgent and largely to blame for the child’s extravagant ways. The father’s servant in India returns to England, falsely claiming that the father has died in battle and that the son now owns the estate. The son, a spendthrift and a gaming addict, promptly loses the family fortune at the hands of two professional sharpers (Vermin and Lord Fleecum), at which point he talks his mother into selling her jointure. The other characters in the play are the spoiled child’s uncle and cousin, the latter of whom he loves and wishes to marry, though his profligacy endangers the match. The sober and sensible uncle is appalled by his nephew’s dissipation, and plans to

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108 Kinservik, *Disciplining Satire*, Appendix. The manuscript is at the Pennsylvania State University, shelfmark PS-V-MS-61. My discussion of this satire is indebted to Kinservik; when I quote from this manuscript, I give the page number from his transcription.
intervene before the family is ruined. The father miraculously appears in the end; the child repents; the villains are exposed; and all is set right.

What is interesting about the manuscript, as Kinservik points out, is that it includes detailed remarks about the responses Macklin wanted his characters to elicit from the audience. These notes give us rare insight into the process of creation, showing us a playwright thinking about how to create effect. Macklin’s directives for the characterization of the spoiled child are particularly illustrative:

He must be drawn with Parts, good Sense, and good Nature, otherwise he will not excite Pity in his adversity which he must do.
He must encourage the Arts, merit wherever he finds it.—No; I think this gravity is too amiable.—He must be rather witty, thoughtless, avaricious except where his vanity is concern’d. (225-26)

The spoiled child is undoubtedly a satiric target—his imprudence is the cause of the problems in the play—but Macklin clearly wants the audience to identify with him, at least up to a point. Macklin did not want his protagonist to be “too amiable,” but neither should he be irredeemable. Vermin, we are told, “must be a man of Fortune, a Lord who was ruined as an honest man & a gentleman” (221). The audience was not to dismiss either the child or the more actively wicked Vermin as a reprobate. *The Spoild Child* manuscript is a salutary reminder that playwrights do think in terms of audience reaction. Macklin is worrying about how to elicit the reaction he wants, the effect that makes his satiric point come across as he means it to.

Insistence on sympathetic response notwithstanding, *The Spoild Child* has much of Macklin’s usual darkness. The uncle, clearly the satiric spokesman, is aware of his own ineffectuality as a satirist: Macklin stipulates that he is to be “peevish,—ironical—with now and then a Strong vein of gravity & Severity,—his Mirth and laughing Satir must be the Consequence of an assured Resignation” (226). The uncle is convinced that the child is incorrigible—he “does not want for good nature,” but he has been ruined by his upbringing and by the depravity of the age (240). What impression the final version of the play would have given is impossible to guess, but Macklin seems prepared both to grant potential human goodness and to take a less than sunny view of human behavior. *The Spoild Child* notes suggest an enterprise significantly different from *The School for Husbands* and *The Man of the World*, but in none of
these works does Macklin approach the softness of the popular reform-oriented social comedies. His view of human nature, as reflected in the afterpieces and the full-length comedies, is decidedly sour, and his exposure of human failings is never particularly affectionate or amused.

David Garrick

To conclude a section on dramatic satire with Garrick may seem strange. Insofar as scholars think of mid- to late-eighteenth century satiric drama, they mostly have in mind Foote and Macklin, and sometimes Goldsmith and Sheridan. Garrick acted satiric roles, staged satiric plays as co-manager of Drury Lane (1747-76), and wrote quite a lot of satire in his own right, in the form of plays, prologues, epilogues, and poems. Garrick scholars venerate their subject, hailing him as the great eighteenth-century champion of Shakespeare, the high-minded enemy of pantomime and other “low” forms, and a smooth, witty, charming man about town. They have little to say about his satire, and satire critics have if anything paid less attention to him. As much as anyone else, however, Garrick does the different types of satire I have been discussing—social comedy, lightweight comic afterpieces, mimicry, and individuated ridicule.

Garrick’s plays are fairly standard-pattern stuff: lightweight, mildly satiric entertainment. I have already discussed some of his afterpieces, which vary in tone from strictly flip (Miss in Her Teens) to slightly tart (A Peep Behind the Curtain). Whatever his disdain for the taste of the town, and whatever the grand claims his twentieth-century admirers make for his single-handed reformation of the stage, he does pander to the crowd. Richard W. Bevis explains Garrick’s relationship to his audience as an odd mixture of “flattering accommodation and barely concealed hostility,”109 and that seems about right. When he mocks the morals and manners of “the town” in A Peep, he does so with a faint but distinct sourness. Nowhere is the conflict between high-minded artist and hard-headed businessman clearer than in Harlequin’s Invasion (1759; not published until the twentieth century). Garrick’s satire on pantomime

109 Bevis, The Laughing Tradition, 146.
takes the form of a pantomime; the champion of high culture simultaneously mocks and capitalizes on the popularity of theatrical illegiti. Garrick would no doubt have liked loftily to ignore pantomime, but Covent Garden Theatre had made huge sums with the genre. His rival manager, John Rich, was the principal contriver (and until 1752 had been the principal performer) of pantomime, and even Garrick admitted that in his own line Rich was a genius. Rich, he granted, could “with matchless art and whim” give “the pow’r of speech to ev’ry limb,” but Drury Lane’s Harlequin “Requires a tongue” if he is to be “understood.” Nonsensical pantomime might be, but his theatre was forced to fight fire with fire, and did so (much to his frustration) with only limited success. At the start of Garrick’s spoof, one of the characters expresses perplexed enthusiasm: “Damn me if I know what it is. But it will be the making of us all.” (1:202). Garrick hardly celebrates the form. His Harlequin is a French interloper who needs to be expelled from England. A stage direction in the final scene reflects the playwright’s wishful thinking: “Shakespear rises: Harlequin sinks” (224). Whistling in the dark, yes, but Garrick is no fool. He is commercially-minded, notorious among his contemporaries for his desire for wealth and fame, and prepared to supply what audiences demanded.

Garrick’s revision of Wycherley’s The Country-Wife is some indication of his desire to suit the crowd—and of the radical shift in preferences from hard to humane comic satire. In the “Advertisement” to The Country Girl (1766), Garrick explains that he “thought himself bound to preserve as much of the original as could be presented to an audience of these times without offence,” but that, “There seems . . . an absolute necessity for reforming” such plays (7:199). Cleaning up Wycherley required considerable revision: Pinchwife becomes Moody, not yet married to Peggy Thrift (Margery); the Fidgets and Squeamishes disappear; Horner vanishes, and instead we have Belville, who wants not to bed and

abandon the country girl but to marry her and live happily ever after, even if that means losing her fortune. Peggy and Belville unite at the play’s end, and the country girl’s apology to Alithea (for her betrayal of Moody) reflects just how little of Wycherley’s spirit remains: “I hope you will forgive me . . . for playing your brother this trick. Indeed, I should have only made him and myself miserable had we married together” (253). Everything is for the best and all is forgiven. The result, in Hume’s phrasing, is a “gutted corpse.” Wycherley’s play is a cynical critique of London life; Garrick’s emasculated version is emphatically humane, offering a traditional romance plot in which youth and love triumph. Isaac Bickerstaff’s revision of The Plain Dealer (staged at Drury Lane in 1765) reflects the same moralizing impulse. The basic plot remains unchanged, but, the author tells us in the preface, “several things . . . called very much for correction” (vi). Bickerstaff’s modification of the discovery scene—in which Vernish realizes that Fidelia is a woman—is a nice example of what would not do. In Wycherley’s play, Vernish cries out, “How! A very handsom Woman I’m sure then: here are Witnesses of’t too, I confess—”; the stage direction reads, “Pulls off her Peruke, and feels her breasts.” Bickerstaff’s Fidelia reveals herself as a woman, to which Vernish replies (hands well away from her torso), “A very handsome one, I am sure. . . . But why in this masquerade?—Well, no matter” (78). Carolean comedy has gone distinctly soft.

Garrick and Colman’s The Clandestine Marriage (1766), which invokes Hogarth’s Marriage A-la-mode in its prologue, is very much in line with the full-length social comedies I described at the start of this section. The “clandestine marriage” is that between Fanny Sterling and Lovewell, her father’s clerk; at the beginning of the play, they have been married for four months and she is pregnant. Neither of the timid young lovers has wanted to inform Fanny’s mercenary father of the match. The plot thickens when two visitors—Lord Ogleby and Sir John Melvil, the latter come to marry Fanny’s older sister, Miss Sterling—both fall head over heels for Fanny. They separately announce their desires to her and to her

112 Hume, Rakish Stage, 353.
113 John Lee had done much the same thing to Wycherley in his sanitized The Country Wife (1765; also staged at Drury Lane), though his play is a two-act farce rather than a full-length social comedy.
father, and Sir John even offers to knock £30,000 off the demanded dowry if he can swap Miss Sterling for Fanny (1:295). The young lovers’ still lack the nerve to reveal their union—but marriage will out, and when Lovewell is discovered in Fanny’s room in the small hours of the night, the truth is brought to light. Somewhat in the spirit of honest Ranger, Ogleby sets aside his own disappointment and, when Mr. Sterling threatens to send the couple packing, he intervenes on their behalf: “Come, come, melt a little of your flint, Mr. Sterling.” Sir John, too, proves a tender heart: he chivvies Lovewell for not having more pluck, apologizes for having pursued Fanny, and concludes, “I have sensibility enough to be ashamed of the part I have acted and honor enough to rejoice at your happiness” (330). *The Clandestine Marriage* combines trenchant social satire against the greedy Mr. Sterling with gentle mockery of sensibility (“Excuse this weakness, this delicacy—this what you will,” says Fanny [317]), but Garrick and Colman also celebrate benevolence and right-doing.

Garrick as manager of Drury Lane and commercial playwright is a public entertainer, but he is also on occasion a private entertainer, and in those circumstances he proves himself capable of a very different type of satire. In 1981, Harry William Pedicord printed for the first time Garrick’s bawdy Shakespearean parody, *Ragandjaw*, done for a small group of friends and friends of friends in 1746.115 This skit is a travesty of IV.iii of *Julius Caesar*, in which Brutus quarrels with Cassius and is then visited by the ghost of Caesar. In *Ragandjaw*, the Roman generals become English officers, Brutarse (played by Garrick’s host, John Hoadly) and Cassiarse (played by Garrick), and instead of Caesar’s ghost the paranormal visitor is the Devil’s Cook (played by Hogarth, another of Hoadly’s guests). This “tent travesty gave ample opportunity to its cast to satirize the conventions of stage deportment,” Pedicord explains, and it “serves as a heady sample of the taste of these gentlemen and their friends in private” (198).

That taste is categorically obscene. The 186-line skit is playfully ribald, infinitely closer in tone to Carolean lampoonery than to the decorous innocence promised in the advertisement to *The Country*

115 Pedicord, “*Ragandjaw*: Garrick’s Shakespearean Parody for a Private Theatre,” *Philological Quarterly* 60 (1981): 197-204. The MS is Norfolk Record Office WKC 7/48, 404 x 2 (Keton-Cremer).
Girl. Cassiarse objects to Brutarse’s turning out of camp a woman he fancied for himself; Brutarse sneers at him for risking his health on such a strumpet (“I smell the brimstone and see the scabs”), and the squabble heats up (200). After an animated exchange of excremental insults, Cassiarse exits, and Brutarse is accosted by the Devil’s Cook:

> I am Old Nick’s cook—and hither am I come
>  To slick some steaks from off thy brawny bum!
>  Make sausage of thy guts, and candles of thy fat,
>  And cut thy cock off to regale his cat. (202)

When the Cook departs, Brutarse realizes that he has shat himself; the parody ends with Garrick (as Brutarse) delivering up a piece of non-wisdom: “Trust not your breeches too far—Our moral teaches, / That turds were made for pots and not for breeches” (203). As satire, Ragandjaw provides little more than sophomoric humor and coarse entertainment, but it does illustrate the ways in which audience dictated satiric production, as well as the fact that the sainted Garrick could spin anything from high-toned humane comedy to scatological travesty.

Garrick is better known as a playwright and a performer than as a poet, but his miscellaneous verse is at least quasi-satirical. These works represent an affable socialite’s slightly acid acknowledgment of the way of the world. Garrick is not upset or distressed, and while he sometimes nips he rarely bites. The epilogue to The Lying Valet (1741) is spoken by the title character: “That I’m a lying rogue, you all agree; / And yet look round the world and you will see / How many more my betters lye as fast as me.”

The world is all alike, and Garrick’s catalogue of deceivers is lively but cynical: “a beau’s intrigues, a lover’s sighs, / The courtier’s promise, the rich widow’s cries, / And patriot’s zeal, are seldom more than lies.”

116 His disapproval of the manners and taste of the town is a recurrent theme. In his epilogue to James Ralph’s The Astrologer (1744), he grumbles that “nought but Alamode de France goes down,” and in his 1763 “Address to the Town” he sarcastically hits at the fickleness of the crowd (1:89, 192-93). The 1785 edition of Garrick’s Poetical Works includes some sixty pages of epitaphs and epigrams, in which

116 The Poetical Works of David Garrick, Esq., 1:82, 83. All quotations in this paragraph are from this edition.
the satire consists of cheerily insubstantial put-downs. The “Epigram, written soon after Dr. Hill’s Farce, called The Rout, was acted” is a four-line wisecrack: “For physic and farces, / His equal there scarce is; / His farces are physic, / His physic a farce is” (2:489). He takes passing shots at James Quin, Kitty Clive, Thaddeus Fitzpatrick, and others. In “A Recipe for a Modern Critic,” he offers a predictable ironic formula for critical success: criticism is composed “Of sarcasms two hundred from any old book; / Of candour a grain, and of scandal a ton; / Of knowledge two ounces, of merit not one” (2:510). In these verses, Garrick is often sour without being harsh. This is a universe away from high-heat denunciation, but he is capable of and takes a certain pleasure in hitting things and hitting people with a pea-shooter. The prologues and epilogues have buzz with no sting; the epigrams and miscellaneous poems have bite without teeth.

Garrick can issue mild rebuke, but he can also play nasty. Like Foote, he had a skill for on-stage mimicry—so much that Theophilus Cibber charged Garrick with starting the vogue on which Foote capitalized. In Garrick’s 1741 performance of Bayes in The Rehearsal, Kinservik explains, “he changed the nature of the satire . . . from a burlesque of authors to an attack on acting styles,” unkindly aping “the exaggerated performances of Denis Delane, Sacheveral Hale, and Lacy Ryan.” Cibber takes offense at this perversion of a “witty Satyr,” which in Garrick’s performance becomes “a motley Medley of Buffoonery, to explode the Actors” (44, 45). Garrick’s biographers insist that he “soon abandoned the personal mimickry in order clearly to attack the concept” of ostentatious acting, but disapproving contemporaries do not let him off quite so easily. In A Letter to David Garrick, Esq. On His Conduct as Principal Manager and Actor at Drury-Lane (1772), David Williams sharply rebukes Garrick for using his “powers of mimickry” to disparage others and elevate himself. Williams repeats a myth much-repeated in the late eighteenth century—namely, that Garrick’s mean-spirited impersonations contributed to the alcoholism and death of Delane (10, 11). William Kenrick, a personal antagonist of Garrick’s,

117 Theophilus Cibber to David Garrick, Esq; with Dissertations on Theatrical Subjects (1759), 44-45.
similarly upbraids Roscius for his severe impersonations, on-stage lampoons that are cruel and unjustified. In his adulatory Memoirs of Garrick, Thomas Davies distinguishes between his subject’s and Foote’s satiric practices. Davies criticizes the English Aristophanes (“to insure a laugh,” he “would deal in scandal, obscenity, and profaneness”) and warmly praises Garrick (who “always paid a proper respect to himself and his company”). This encomium is typical of the rapture with which Garrick’s students regard him, but the contemporary protests against Roscius’s hurtful impersonations suggest that his personal ridicule was not always taken in good fun.

Garrick’s best-known personal satire is The Fribbleriad (1761; 1s), part of an ongoing feud with the Irish critic Thaddeus Fitzpatrick. Fitzpatrick had published attacks on Garrick—signing them “XYZ”—and in The Fribbleriad Garrick responds by satirizing his enemy in professional and personal terms. In the advertisement, Garrick explains that “X, Y, Z . . . has thrown about his dirt in a most extraordinary manner, and has attacked our stage hero, with unwearied malvolence both in his public and private character” (v). In the poem proper, he mocks Fribble as unlearned and effeminate. “A Man it seems—’tis hard to say—/ A Woman then?—a moment pray—,” he jeers, and then, “Some things it does may pass for either, / And some it does belong to neither” (2). Garrick unfavorably compares the cowardly “X, Y, Z” with the brave Churchill: Fribble is not man enough to own his attacks (4-5). The Fribbleriad is not exactly an exercise in unprovoked meanness, but it is an energetic and cutting put-down of a public rival.

Much of the topical satire of this quarter century, as I suggested in the first section, has to do with literary/theatrical squabbles like the one between Garrick and Fitzpatrick. Garrick is a common target among his contemporaries, and he is generally a fairly cheerful combatant in these paper wars, but on one

120 Kenrick, A Letter to David Garrick, Esq. occasioned by his having moved the Court of King’s Bench against the publisher of Love in the suds . . . (1772), 7. In Williams’s Letter, he dwells upon Garrick’s nastiness in ridiculing potential rivals, either by impersonating them on-stage or by spreading rumors: whenever another actor “has the ill-luck to be mentioned with commendation for his public talents . . . his figure, his gestures, his face, his voice are stretched on the rack of ridicule; his private character is stabbed by a misrepresented anecdote, or an exaggerated foible” (11). The theatre manager’s scandalmongering is effective because the “fools of quality . . . pay an implicit belief to whatever comes from the dear mouth of the wonderful Garrick” (12).

occasion he took serious offence. Kenrick had disagreed with Garrick about the distribution of proceeds from the final night of *Falstaff’s Wedding* in 1771, and he had been frustrated by delays in staging his plays. In 1772, looking for vengeance, he published *Love in the Suds; A Town Eclogue being the Lamentation of Roscius for the Loss of his Nyky*. The poem features the desolate Roscius (Garrick, obviously) lamenting the absence of Nyky (Bickerstaff, who had fled the country to escape a sodomy charge): “why should NYKY thus be blam’d? / Of manly love ah! why are men, asham’d?” (6). Kenrick’s explicit satiric point is that Garrick has been homosexually involved with the disgraced Bickerstaff.

Garrick was outraged. Afraid of prosecution for libel, Kenrick published an apology of sorts, though his *Letter to David Garrick* (1772) is full of barbs. He asks why Roscius can dish out abuse but cannot take it: “What prerogative to exempt him from being attacked as he has attacked others?” He then proceeds to mock the “parasitical servility” with which Bickerstaff “clung round the heels” of Garrick (7). Literary history remembers Kenrick as the loser of this battle, and rightly so: his irritation and jealousy compelled him to write a libelous personal lampoon, and the result was public embarrassment for him. Garrick, Churchill, Murphy and others wrote sharp personal satire and were themselves similarly satirized—but there was clearly a limit to how far such attacks could go.

What kind of satirist is Garrick? His comic afterpieces and miscellaneous poems have edge, but they are never abrasive; he does not go for the jugular; he does not upset his audience. Like Foote, he is an entertainer, a performer as well as a satirist. His view of human nature seems neither particularly dark nor particularly sunny. A work like *The Clandestine Marriage* presents benevolence and decency, but his feelings toward his audience are mixed at best. Garrick is a socialite trying to get on in the world. Does he write satire? Absolutely. Is it significant satire, trying to make things happen or to do damage? No. In many ways his output is some indication of how satire was being used in the third quarter of the century. Foote and Macklin are much less upbeat about humankind than most of their contemporaries, but this is not a period propitious for unmitigated harshness. Neither do satirists in either verse or drama seem to be angling for change. For the most part, mid- to late-eighteenth-century satirists do not
challenge the status quo. Generic differences notwithstanding, we will find that much the same can be said of novels.

IV. Satire in the mid-eighteenth-century novel

What is the relationship between “satire” and “the novel” in the mid-to late-eighteenth century? Paulson was the first scholar to try systematically to answer that question, and what he describes is an awkward and imprecise union of two fundamentally distinct genres: the novel “was by no means uninfluenced by satire, and yet was no longer what a critic could safely call satire.” “Augustan satire infiltrated the novel,” he suggests, and on other occasions he explains that satire “entered” the novel, that the novel “accommodated” satire, and that we find “satire adjusting to, rather than being submerged by” the assumptions made by novelists. Frank Palmeri’s explanation of what happens to satire after Pope and Swift is an attempt to complement Paulson’s. Palmeri concludes that many of satire’s “elements, although disavowed and suppressed, made their way into conjectural histories and from there helped shape later novelistic genres. . . . Despite being discredited and suppressed, satiric form continued to be appropriated, reinterpreted, and reshaped by histories and novels throughout the eighteenth century.”

Paulson and Palmeri are right that reference to Swiftian satire does not much help us with the second half of the century, but they conceive of what happens to satire in very narrow and negative terms.

The ways in which narrative utilizes satire, and the difference between verse and prose narrative satire, remain underexplored and undertheorized subjects. One of the principal contributions in this realm is Palmeri’s Satire in Narrative (1990). Palmeri offers a bold and basic differentiation: verse satire “almost always expresses a conservative view of the world in language that approaches a purely dogmatic, monological state,” but narrative satire by contrast “usually expresses a more subversive line of

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122 Paulson, Satire and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England, 8, 9, prefatory note, 306, 309. Paulson’s suggestion that satire “disappears” as a major genre ignores the vast amount of poetry so labeled (237).

attack, making a more dialogical use of language.”

Whatever the utility of the Bakhtinian viewpoint and terminology, Palmeri seems to me to overstate the ideological differences between verse and narrative satire. Obviously one can find verse satirists with “subversive” outlooks (from my survey, Ayloffe and Rochester come immediately to mind), and a huge number of novelists seem fairly conservative in their satire, including most of the writers relevant to this chapter as well as (say) Evelyn Waugh, one of the major satiric novelists of the twentieth century. One of Palmeri’s examples is Swift’s *Tale*, which may express its author’s “unease with authority,” as Palmeri suggests, but is quite conservative in its religio-political outlook (62). Smollett uses satire in both verse and prose, and I would argue that the authorial position reflected in *Peregrine Pickle* is not fundamentally different from that reflected in his verse satires. The novels are longer and their satire mostly more diluted by plot and character, but I see no evidence that Smollett’s concept of satire shifts markedly as he moves from genre to genre.

A broadly based attempt to theorize what happens to satire when it is practiced in narrative forms is a genuine desideratum. How much such a theory would help us with eighteenth-century English novels is another matter. There are not a great many satiric novels in this period, and I cannot find enough consistency in target, method, or authorial outlook to generate an implicit theoretical position. I have therefore limited myself to a basic question: what forms of satire are found in mid- to late-eighteenth-century English fiction? Surveying Smollett, Fielding, Sterne, Goldsmith, and others, we find considerable differences in the way satire is used. One of the most obvious factors to consider here might be termed “dilution.” Some novels contain a relatively high proportion of satiric material; in others it is more occasional or incidental. Proportion of satiric content aside, what I have found suggests a significant degree of taxonomic parallelism between fiction and other genres. Some novels stress

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124 Palmeri, *Satire in Narrative: Petronius, Swift, Gibbon, Melville, and Pynchon* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 6. Palmeri attempts to revise Bakhtin’s notion of parody, which (he argues) simply “dislodges officiodom by means of carnival, its inverting opposite.” Palmeri’s theory of satiric narrative is that it parodies both the official world and its opposite: “Narrative satire presents a parodic antithesis to orthodoxy and then the negative of that antithesis; it describes a dialectic without a synthesis” (2, 3).
negative presentation (Smollett); some present both positive and negative models (Fielding); some pass
judgment (Lennox); and some seem designed to provoke thought (Sterne). Real differences are created
by the relative prominence of plot and character, and by the dilution of satiric impact caused by those
elements. Such differences notwithstanding, what the novelists do with satire seems to me generally
similar to the kinds of satire practiced in poetry and drama.

**Smollett’s dark satire**

Of the eighteenth-century novelists, Smollett is considered the most satirical. A notoriously fiery
Scotsman, he lashed a corrupt society in his two verse satires, *Advice* and *Reproof*; ridiculed French
cowardice in his dreadful patriotic farce, *The Reprisal: or, the Tars of Old England* (1757); and attacked
Newcastle and then the opposition to Bute in his polemical *Briton* (29 May 1762-12 February 1763).\(^{125}\)
Smollett is outspoken, aggressive, politically and personally combative; his critics always underscore his
moral intention. What he thought his satire would accomplish is impossible to guess, but his novels
undoubtedly have moral seriousness, as well as a satiric edge not often found in the second half of the
century.

Both *Roderick Random* (1748; 2 vols.; 6s†) and *Peregrine Pickle* (1751; 4 vols.; 12s†) recount
the adventures of a wayfaring protagonist whose exploits allow the author to satirize a number of
character types, institutions, follies, and so on. In the preface to *Roderick Random*, Smollett champions
good-humored and high-spirited satire: “Of all kinds of satire, there is none so entertaining, and
universally improving, as that which is introduced . . . occasionally, in the course of an interesting story.”
He also suggests that the reader ought to be “prepossessed” in favor of the hero in distress, that he ought
to appreciate “the contrast between dejected virtue, and insulting vice,” so that “the heart improves by the
example.” The target is the world and its inhabitants. The protagonist suffers “from his own want of

\(^{125}\) Smollett is probably also the author of a prose piece called *A Faithful Narrative of the Base and
inhuman Arts That were lately practic’d upon the Brain of Habbukkuk Hilding* (1752; 6d), an absolutely savage
attack on Fielding and Lyttelton. For attribution to Smollett, see O. M. Brack, Jr., “Tobias Smollett’s Authorship of
experience, as well as from the selfishness, envy, malice, and base indifference of mankind.” In Roderick Random, this is more or less what Smollett gives us. Roderick is an essentially well-meaning but far from exemplary innocent, and the people he meets—excepting a few truly virtuous individuals—behave abominably. When a shipwrecked and injured Roderick washes up on the English shore, what he encounters is cravenness and selfish pragmatism. One character reflects that “if he dies, we must be at the charge of burying him,” and has him carted to someone else’s door (213). We feel sorry for him, or we would if his story were more realistic, and Smollett’s satiric point is simple enough. He presents a few positive exemplars and a lot of bad ones, and the cumulative effect of the novel is to suggest the pervasiveness of greed, malice, self-interest, and chicanery.

The satire of Peregrine Pickle works in much the same fashion, with the significant difference that Peregrine is a much less sympathetic figure than Roderick. “His occasional acts of kindness and generosity,” Jerry C. Beasley rightly concludes, “do not balance against his frequent cruelties, as the latter—like his relentless pranks—seem unmotivated; he is compulsively greedy, opportunistic, profligate, promiscuous, predatory.” Helpless and abused, Roderick excites compassion, as well as judgment on the society that makes such suffering possible. Peregrine inspires no such tender feelings, though his bad behavior hardly causes us to excuse the depravity of those around him. The satire in Roderick Random and Peregrine Pickle is not complicated. In these works as throughout his oeuvre, Smollett takes passing shots at doctors, lawyers, politicians, parties, other writers, and so on. He also presents a panoramic picture of inanity, injustice, cruelty, pride, vanity, and any number of foibles and vices exhibited by his protagonists and the characters (usually caricatures) they encounter. Both novels end happily. Roderick returns home to Scotland with his father, marries his beloved “Narcissa,” and settles into an ever more blissful life. Compelled by his love of the virtuous Emilia, Peregrine reforms, and enjoys his lady and their inherited wealth. The romantic denouements are overly facile, probably

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deliberately so. Smollett is no optimist, and the imposition of the fairy tale ending only calls attention to its own implausibility. Distributive justice seems an idealist’s fancy—this is not the way the world works. As in something like *The Nabob* or *The School for Scandal*, vice is exposed without being punished or expelled. The fast pace and humor of these novels notwithstanding, their satiric implications are grim.

The epistolary *Humphry Clinker* (1771) is, of course, the most genial and temperate of Smollett’s novels. The two principal letter-writers are Matthew Bramble (unwell and loudly cantankerous, but secretly philanthropic) and his nephew, the mirthful and easygoing Jery Melford (“Those follies, that move my uncle’s spleen,” he remarks, “excite my laughter”). The two men are surrounded by a comic cast, especially in Tabitha (Bramble’s sister, an elderly and prudish but sex-starved maiden), the Cervantean Caledonian, Lismahago, and the eponymous Humphry, a good-hearted simpleton. Smollett passes satiric judgment as he had in the earlier novels, but *Humphry Clinker* is not just a succession of abuses or a string of episodes revelatory of human treachery, and its author does not rub his readers’ noses in wickedness and folly. Whether the novel reflects Smollett’s concession of the futility of indignation (as Beasley suggests) or simply his mellowing, *Humphry Clinker*’s satiric edge is blunted and its tone appreciably less dark than the earlier works.

Smollett’s other two novels, less well known, are different from each other in plot and tone, but as satires both have weighty implications. Like *Roderick Random* and *Peregrine Pickle*, both *Ferdinand Count Fathom* (1753; 2 vols.; 6s†) and *Sir Launcelot Greaves* (pub. serially, 1760-61) narrate the adventures of wandering protagonists. Fathom is Smollett’s most villainous creation; Peregrine is a rogue, but the Count is a thoroughgoing criminal, a sexual predator whose charm and evil make him terrifying. The novel is overrun by villains, sharers and murderers and thieves. Although Smollett

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128 Says Beasley of *Roderick Random*’s ending: “the erratic, fragmented, chaotic course of Roderick’s life is suddenly resolved into orderliness and quietude; and there is a bit too much reliance on easy romance convention to suit this novel” (*Tobias Smollett*, 69).
shows us virtue in Renaldo and Monimia, the world he describes is oppressively negative, and the unconscionable Fathom’s eventual repentance makes a satiric point by its very impossibility. If Fathom is the picture of evil, Sir Launcelot is the picture of pure goodness. Zealously pursuing ways to help his fellows (all while fitted out in full armor), the Quixotic Sir Launcelot is regarded as a lunatic. Through his quests, Smollett highlights the perversity of the norms against which Greaves is considered mad, and also the ultimate unchangeability of the world. Although the knight wins small battles and triumphs over particular foes, the values and the ways of human society cannot be transformed. Neither chivalry nor satire is going to make much difference. Sir Launcelot is Smollett’s most idealistic figure, but Sir Launcelot Greaves is in many ways his darkest novel.

Less bleak but more indignant is The History and Adventures of an Atom (1769; 2 vols.; 5s†), a political rather than social or moral satire and Smollett’s angriest prose piece. The Atom is a lengthy allegory, ancient Japanese political history as told to a London haberdasher by an atom that has lived inside the bodies of several leaders of state. The atom’s narrative, he explains to his listener, ought to serve “for the instruction of British ministers.” In this hate-filled screed, Smollett issues a blanket denunciation of mid-century political life—the handling of war, ministers, parliamentary venality, the aristocracy, the ignorant mob, George II and George III, and both parties. Smollett rebukes both the Whigs and the Tories as “abusive, rancorous, uncandid, and illiberal,” but his most savage energy is directed at Newcastle (97). The Newcastle figure in the scatological Atom is “Fika-kaka,” undoubtedly (as Robert Adams Day points out) a pun on the Italian words “fica” and “caca”—“cunt-shit.” Smollett sharply disapproves of the importance of flattery and sycophancy and the irrelevance of merit, and his attitude toward the higher-ups is deflationary and irreverent. His derision is forcibly and frequently communicated. Fika-kaka becomes the sovereign’s favorite largely because he

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132 Day’s introduction to the Atom is extremely useful; on Smollett’s list of political ills, see in particular pp. xxxvi-xxxvii.
133 See Day’s Key to the Atom, 254. Many eighteenth-century printings of the Atom, he notes, contained explanatory keys (249).
not only devoted himself entirely to the gratification of his master’s prejudices and rapacity, even when they interfered the most with the interest and reputation of Japan; but he also submitted personally to his capricious humours with the most placid resignation. He presented his posteriors to be kicked as regularly as the day revolved; and presented them not barely with submission, but with all the appearance of fond desire. (14-15)

The *Atom* represents Smollett at his most irascible, obscene, and ferocious, and it is livid satire of a kind uncommon in this quarter century. Smollett does not criticize the status quo as much as he damns it wholesale. His petulant diatribe received mixed reviews, some commentators admitting its cleverness but most censuring its indelicacy, and several respondents objected on political grounds. As Day notes, publishing the *Atom* in 1765 would have caused a greater sensation and probably gotten Smollett in trouble. By 1769, the key personages scorched in the satire were either dead or had become politically insignificant.134 Smollett’s political opponents might have caviled at his bilious invective, but the *Atom* is simply that. Neither a Juvenalian performance nor a piece of propaganda, it is a bitter, hopeless expression of unmitigated disgust.

*The late career of Fielding*

The Fielding of *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* is a tender-hearted realist with a good deal of patience and a hearty sense of humor. His early career is not without darker moments—*The Modern Husband* and *The Universal Gallant* both feature trenchant social satire shrill enough that it does not work very well—but in his last years he is, as all of his students observe, a much more sober and somber commentator on human life and society. The major ventures of this period are *Amelia* (1751; 4 vols.; 12s†) and *The Covent-Garden Journal* (1752), both of which reflect the increasing social-mindedness of Fielding, Bow Street magistrate. They also represent the author at his darkest, writing as a would-be moral/social reformer and as someone dubious about the possibility of change.

*Amelia* is a hard book to like: Fielding is a master of comic indirection, but here his hand is heavy. The plot revolves around the domestic problems of the Booths, the virtuous Amelia and her

134 Day, lxi. On the publication and reception of the *Atom*, see lvii-lxii.
improvident husband, and Fielding satirizes innumerable moral and social ills—self-interest, self-delusion, deceptiveness, adultery, official indifference to individual suffering, the injustice of the legal system, and so on. Not for nothing are the two principal images the masquerade and the prison: this is a novel of duplicity and iniquity. *Amelia* is a book of social realism and grave Christian didacticism, and its satire is a dreary mixture of dour indictment and melancholic preaching. Booth matter-of-factly remarks upon the “malicious Disposition of Mankind” and “the cruel Pleasure which they take in destroying the Reputations of others.”

The narrator sermonizes on the nature of mankind:

> “Wantonness, Vanity, Avarice and Ambition are every Day rioting and triumphing in the Follies and Weakness, the Ruin and Desolation of Mankind” and so on, ever more strident (2:40). The innocent Amelia eventually renounces her faith in humanity, crying out at the end of Book VII, “Well then, there is an End of all Goodness in the World” (3:105). The happy ending supplied for the Booths does nothing to dispel the gloom of the novel. Fielding’s satire on particular groups (e.g., clergymen in Book IX) is sharp; his contempt for the corrupt legal system is total; his moral and social didacticism is direct and atypically harsh. That Fielding conceived his novel as one of social protest is undeniable. As J. Paul Hunter concludes, however, Fielding abandons both his amiable tolerance and his belief in the efficacy of didacticism: “This is no longer the method of the patient, bemused, benevolent teacher, nor of the less jovial, many-faced satirist; it is more like that of a humorless policeman.”

*Amelia* is as cynical as Smollett’s works in its implications, but Fielding’s last novel has a sadness Smollett never exhibits. The hot-headed Scotsman can thunder with conviction; Fielding seems acutely uncomfortable with and unhappy about his own pessimism.

*The Covent-Garden Journal* (4 January-25 November 1752), like *Amelia*, reflects the gravity of Fielding’s late-life social and moral concerns. As in the *Champion* and the *Jacobite’s Journal*, he adopts “the role of Censor on the Roman model, the overseer and judge of the nation’s moral health, charged

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with examining into the lives and manners of its citizens.” Fielding’s last years find him much highertoned than he had been in his earlier satires. Here his focus is on the morals, manners, and taste of English society, including a wide range of problems from discourtesy to impiety. He covers the “PEOPLE OF FASHION” (No. 37), pornography (No. 51), prostitution (No. 57), and adultery (No. 67), critics and editors, bad writers and false learning, the vain and the proud, scandal-mongering and calumny, the disturbing “Rise and Progress” of the mob (No. 49), and countless other public and private vices. His stated goal is to serve “the noble Interests of Religion, Virtue, and good Sense, by these my Lucubrations,” and “to restore that true and manly Taste, which hath, within these few Years, degenerated in these Kingdoms” (No. 5; p. 43). Martin C. and Ruthe R. Battestin explain Fielding’s Journal as an attempt to supplement his role as magistrate, to expose the evils he could not combat with the law. Although his litany of social ills is often delivered with “wit and a sort of sad good humor,” they rightly argue, “the sheer scope of the indictment is a measure of Fielding’s pessimism as he contemplated society during these last years of his life.” His essays are frequently ironic rather than directly denunciatory, and they are sometimes light-hearted, but they do not reflect either the tolerance or the optimism of his earlier satire. As in Amelia, Fielding is both would-be reformer and glum skeptic.

To read The Covent-Garden Journal simply as the solemn moralizing of a disinterested satirist, however, would be misleading. Bertrand A. Goldgar and others have underscored the Journal’s utility as a publicity medium for the Universal Register Office, and Bertelsen points out that Fielding’s Bow Street reports were meant to have entertainment value.

The dialectic of humane and exploitative, official and titillating, that informs Fielding’s descriptions of prostitutes in the Covent Garden columns recurs with remarkable vigor in his reporting of domestic violence and rape cases. The majority of these cases are given

in great detail and include such literary amenities as first-person dialogue, twists and turns of plot, and surprise endings.\footnote{140}{Bertelsen, \textit{Fielding at Work}, 27.}

Legal depositions presented in a commercial paper also served as racy amusements, Bertelsen points out, as Fielding’s detractors hastened to observe. They described his \textit{Journal} as a sensationalist venture designed to promote its author’s personal and business interests \footnote{140}{Bertelsen, \textit{Fielding at Work}, 27.} (4). \textit{The Covent-Garden Journal} is an oddity—a mixture of levity and cynicism, of literary ridicule, sharp social criticism, moral preachment, self-publicity, and sensationalism.\footnote{141}{Another oddity is the non-fictional \textit{The Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon} (pub. posthumously in 1755; 3s†), which combines social commentary and world-weariness with literary game-playing, but that Fielding imagined this as strongly purposive satire I am inclined to doubt. Bertelsen’s reading stresses the playfulness, irreverence, self-reflexivity of Fielding’s \textit{Journal}, and the chaos and contradictoriness of its author’s thinking (\textit{Fielding at Work}, chap. 5).}

\textbf{Tristram Shandy and the singularity of Sterne}

Almost all critics would agree that \textit{Tristram Shandy} (pub. serially, 1759-67) is a satiric novel—but if it is a satire, what is it a satire on? To attempt to discuss \textit{Tristram} in the contexts of standard definitions of satire achieves little beyond demonstrating the limits of those definitions. Putting Sterne in a sequence of satirists merely makes him seem as weird as he is, just as placing him in a sequence of early English novelists entirely fails to demonstrate “the rise of the novel.” Some satire scholars have wanted to see Sterne as a sentimentalized successor of Pope and Swift, an inheritor and modifier of the “Scriblerian” mode. Others view him more broadly as a follower of Rabelais and Burton in the tradition of “learned wit.” Most critics, however, have acknowledged the disconcerting fact that \textit{Tristram Shandy} must be taken on its own terms. For the purposes of the present investigation, I want briefly to address three questions. First, how did Sterne’s contemporaries understand the nature of his enterprise? Second, what sorts of views of Sterne as satirist do we find in the criticism of the last half century? And third, when we look at the text itself, what sorts of satiric functions do we find there?
That *Tristram Shandy*’s first readers did not respond uniformly is hardly surprising. Some readers, as Thomas Keymer points out, “either ignored or consciously refused the interpretive challenge of the text. Some approached the book as simply a source of comic pleasure or obscene wit, whereas others dismissed it as an impudent hoax, a farrago of nonsensical shocks.”¹⁴² The gist of many reactions is bewilderment. A 1760 reviewer begins his discussion with a caveat: “This is a humorous performance, of which we are unable to convey any distinct idea to our readers.”¹⁴³ Other commentators treat *Tristram*’s incomprehensibility with obvious delight: “Oh rare Tristram Shandy!—Thou very sensible—humorous—pathetick—humane—unaccountable!—what shall we call thee?—Rabelais, Cervantes, What?” (*CH*, 52). One of Sterne’s critics observed crossly that the public had been taken by *Tristram*, even though “they did not understand the joke.” At length, he says, they “began to see clearly that Mr. STERNE had amused himself at their cost, and that his work was a riddle, without an object.”¹⁴⁴ The author of *An Admonitory Letter to the Rev. Mr. S[terne] (1761)* addresses Sterne directly: “I should be glad to know, from your own Mouth, what it is you drive at” (7).

Not everyone threw in the towel: some respondents attempted to define Sterne’s satiric aims and targets. One reviewer confidently assured his readers that he had the key to *Tristram*, a work he described as a “compleat system of modern politics,” in which the 1690s wars were meant to represent the Seven Years’ War. By the Siege of Namur, he explains, Sterne meant the 1756 Siege of Fort St. Philip; by Toby’s wound, he meant “the distress the nation was thrown into” by that siege’s failure; and Toby’s “application to the study of fortification, and the knowledge he therein gained, means nothing else but the rectitude and clear sightedness of the administration which afterwards took up the reins of government.”


¹⁴³ *Sterne: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Alan B. Howes (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), 52. Subsequent citations to this collection will be included in text, abbreviated *CH* with page number.

Tristram, he concludes, “is a master piece of allegory” (CH, 66-67). Another expositor just as positively insisted that Tristram Shandy was a general satire on humankind, and on the softer sex in particular: “I am entirely convinced ’tis a smart satyrical piece on the vices of the age, particularly of that part of the Creation, which were designed for the pleasure and happiness of man” (CH, 85). Others identify religion as Sterne’s principal target, some of them indignantly charging him with blasphemy. An enthusiastic advocate of Tristram says cheerfully, “he makes such a joke of religion!—What do you think of his introducing a sermon in the midst of a smutty tale, and making the preacher curse and swear by way of parenthesis?” Sterne’s attackers, he continues, are “stupid drones . . . who do not enter into the spirit of the thing.”

How many of the responses are ironic is hard to guess. Most of the commentators on Tristram Shandy as satire tended to speak in broad terms. Sterne was “ridiculing the ruling passions, or hobby horses, as well as the vices and follies of mankind,” his novel “contains much good satire on the follies of life,” and (suggested Edmund Burke), “The story is in reality nothing more than a vehicle for satire on a great variety of subjects,” mostly having no connection (CH, 105, 139, 106). Less enthusiastic readers balanced praise of Sterne’s general satire with disapprobation of his indecency and indelicacy. Many contemporaries rebuked the clergyman’s bawdiness or were irritated by his self-indulgence and unintelligibility—but some took him much less seriously. In a letter to a friend, Thomas Gray said simply, “there is much good fun in it, & humour sometimes hit & sometimes mist” (CH, 89). What does not get a lot of mention is the philosophical import of Tristram Shandy, which few contemporaries seem to have appreciated; commentators do not

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145 CH, 64. Sterne’s defender mocks the detractors who “charge Tristy with the want of decorum, sentiment and design.—Pox on their decorums, their sentiments, their connections, their systems, and their ratiocinations—Tristy speaks to the senses.”

146 Discussing Sterne’s indulgence in smut and obscenity, one critic laments:“it is really great pity he has not shewn more delicacy in this particular, for otherwise the book is truly excellent in its kind” (CH, 63). As Bosch has argued, “The reviewers recognized in Tristram Shandy a good universal satire—perhaps too chaotically mixed up with unnecessary obscenities . . . but in any case a work that denounces error and vice” (Labyrinth of Digressions, 23).

147 Among Sterne’s detractors was Horace Walpole, who called Tristram Shandy “a very insipid and tedious performance . . . the great humour of which consists in the whole narration always going backwards” (CH, 55).
seem to have thought of Locke when they read Sterne.148 Sterne was undoubtedly making a significant epistemological point, but his contemporaries were mostly exasperated, appalled, moved, or amused.

Twentieth-century critics tend to agree that the novel is satirical—if not a “satire”—but exactly what Sterne is targeting remains an open question. In “Satire and Tristram Shandy” (1961), J. M. Stedmond strove to represent Sterne as a friendlier “Scriblerian.” He argues that, “Tristram Shandy is one more engagement in the perpetual war between wits and ‘dunces,’” but that Sterne’s “approach is much more tentative, his attack much less bitter” than Pope’s or Swift’s—“presumably because his positive beliefs are much less surely held.”149 The only book-length study of Sterne’s satire is Melvyn New’s Laurence Sterne as Satirist (1969), an attempt to demonstrate just how Swiftian Sterne really is.150 New bases his investigation on the premise that “Tristram Shandy joins works like A Tale of a Tub and The Dunciad as one further effort to stem the eighteenth century’s ever increasing enthusiasm for human self-sufficiency,” and that to counter this enthusiasm Sterne tries to expose man’s limitations.151 Certainly Sterne does the latter, but to see Tristram Shandy as “like” A Tale of a Tub and The Dunciad is to miss the mark by a very great distance. What Pope and Swift denounced in their different ways, Sterne makes playful fun of in the midst of a multi-focused and exceptionally jumbled book.

Scholars are for the most part prepared to admit huge temperamental and tonal differences between Sterne and his canonical predecessors, but they naturally tend to underscore his most “Swiftian” or “Popean” targets: bad writing, false learning, critical jargon, the Royal Society scientists, the inanity of public taste, and so on. J. T. Parnell proposes that “Scriblerian and Sternean satire” belongs in the “tradition of skeptical, anti-dogmatic arguments of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,” and that

148 Howes observes that eighteenth-century reviewers made no “extended mention of Locke,” lamenting that “probably most readers did not understand this part of the plan of Tristram Shandy” (Yorick and the Critics, 36).
Sterne—like Swift—is principally concerned to satirize “system builders.”\textsuperscript{152} Keymer rejects the notion of Sterne as simply a “Scriblerian throwback,” though he also understands Tristram Shandy “as heavily conditioned by satirical traditions that culminate with Swift.” He argues that, “If Tristram Shandy is a satire . . . it is above all a satire on the novel, and in this respect it cleverly capitalizes on a potentiality that A Tale of a Tub had intimated but been unable to fulfil.”\textsuperscript{153} Sterne’s “primary interest,” Keymer concludes, “is with large questions about the novel and its mechanisms” (16). That Tristram Shandy reveals the limitations of novel-writing and parodies generic conventions is indubitable, and Sterne just as clearly mocks false pedants and scientific arrogance. But none of these represents a principal satiric aim—each is only a small part of what his novel “does,” and his satire shares nothing with either Pope or Swift in technique, tone, or principal object. Sterne is doing something different.

Modern scholars have wanted to find pre-1750 satiric targets and thrust in Tristram Shandy, but Sterne is very badly explained in those terms. His novel includes various positive and negative forms of “satire,” as critics have recognized. Sterne mocks novelistic conventions, pedants, legalese, the Royal Society scientists, and the sort of intellectualism reflected in Walter Shandy, a comic virtuoso both benign and ridiculous. Walter is “a philosopher in grain,—speculative,—systematical,”\textsuperscript{154} and Sterne invites his readers to laugh at him, both as a natural philosopher determined to regulate life and as an orator unable to communicate with those around him. Sterne approves of deep feeling—witness his admiring presentation of the tender-hearted Uncle Toby (“This world surely is wide enough to hold both thee and

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\textsuperscript{153} Keymer, Sterne, the Moderns, and the Novel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 7. Keymer argues that Swift could not really parody a genre that had not really established recognizable conventions, but that by the mid-century, “the novel was securely established as the chosen medium of Swift’s ‘freshest moderns,’ the crowning achievement of the energies they represent, the quintessential mode—subjective, circumstantial, digressive, transgressive—of commercialized modern writing. . . . it is only with Tristram Shandy in the 1760s . . . that Swift’s hack could be fully reinvented as a narrator whose writing evokes, exaggerates, and subverts the ambitions and techniques of modern fiction” (7-8).
\textsuperscript{154} The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman, ed. Melvyn New and Joan New, 3 vols. (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1979-84), 1:76.
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me”)—but he mocks sentimental excesses. The joke of *Tristram Shandy* is often on the reader, whom Sterne playfully taunts throughout. He also pokes fun at the “human tendency to indulge in posturing,” whether melodramatic, intellectual, or sentimental.

Unlike Sterne’s contemporaries, scholars appreciate the philosophical weight of his satire. Sterne mockingly illustrates that people are unknowable, that language is limited, that reason and sentiment are both insufficient in trying to organize and cope with the chaos of life. Peter M. Briggs argues that, “*Tristram Shandy* is quintessentially a book about man’s attempt to give a reasonable and definitive form to his experience of the world—and about the inevitable tendency of experience to run counter to man’s formulations.” His conclusion seems about right. The satiric message of *Tristram Shandy*, underlying a lot of scatter-shot ridicule, is philosophically skeptical. Sterne undercuts the arrogant human sense of certitude and epistemological security. The skeptical thrust of Sterne’s satire, however, is presented with much good cheer, a sense of humor, and manifest warmth toward humankind. As Briggs suggests, Sterne’s emphasis on human limitations has a positive upshot: “Because man lives in this world amongst riddles and mysteries, because he cannot gain a consistent grasp upon his own experiences and upon the values and perceptions of others, he should be generous, patient, honest, and good-humored; the more inscrutable or divided the world seems, the more necessary the Golden Rule is in the conduct of human affairs.”

Sterne certainly claimed a constructive purpose for his novel, insisting that he wrote *Tristram Shandy* in “the hopes of doing the world good by ridiculing what I thought deserving of it.” To his publisher, he explained that the novel’s “Plan” was “a most extensive one, —taking in, not only, the Weak part of the Sciences, in w[ch] the true point of Ridicule lies—but every Thing else, which I find

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158 The most systematic study of Sterne’s “skepticism” is Fred Parker’s *Scepticism and Literature: An Essay on Pope, Hume, Sterne, and Johnson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), chap. 5.
Laugh-at-able in my way—." What he found “Laugh-at-able” mostly involves egotism and epistemological overconfidence: Sterne asserts and demonstrates real limits to how much we can know about ourselves, others, and life more generally, but as a response to those constrictions he offers amused acceptance as an alternative to despair. *Tristram Shandy* is not without melancholy and hard truth, but Sterne, as Weinbrot says, is “having too much fun to be gloomy.” For my purposes, what is important about *Tristram Shandy* is that Sterne is not decrying evil in the fashion of the “Scriblerians,” and neither is he offering commercial entertainment or superficial social mockery. His satire is tempered by his good nature, but his critical scrutiny of our epistemological pretensions has serious import for anyone who wants to read beyond the flip story and dirty jokes. *Tristram Shandy* is not well explained in terms of pre-1750 satiric targets and thrusts, but it does not exactly fit any mid-century category either. In satiric terms, this is strange. One of the lessons of my survey is that a work’s particular place in chronology tends to be pretty critical. Sterne’s parody of novel-writing and the sympathy of his satire both make *Tristram Shandy* very much of its age, but, as several critics have seen, it is essentially a one-off.

Sterne’s other satirical ventures share very little with *Tristram Shandy*. *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1768; 5s†) satirizes travel writing, and in particular Sterne criticizes Smollett’s *Travels through France and Italy* (1766; 10s†) as the excessively censorious production of “the learned Smelfungus” (1:86). The problem for critics has been how we are meant to feel about the sentimental narrator, Parson Yorick. He is a man of sensibility (good), but he is also self-interested—following charitable acts with telltale self-congratulation—and his carnality makes *A Sentimental Journey* a book of double entendres and bawdy humor. Sterne uses Yorick to satirize a variety of targets, but he also invites

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162 *Tristram Shandy* is an oddity, but, as Eric Rothstein has shown, it does have methodological similarities with other popular fiction of the later eighteenth century. Rothstein argues that, in Sterne’s novel, *Rasselas*, *Humphry Clinker*, *Amelia*, and *Caleb Williams*, “form—pattern, design, order—is keyed to a concern with epistemological inquiry,” and that “the systems of the five novels closely resemble each other.” See *Systems of Order and Inquiry in Later Eighteenth-Century Fiction* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975), 2-3.
satiric judgment of the narrator. Sterne’s digs at Smollett and at false charity are undoubtedly sincerely meant, as is his appreciation of benevolence and finer feelings, but how seriously we are to take it as satire remains a vexed question. More straightforward in its satiric purposes is *A Political Romance* (1759), a burlesque squib written against ecclesiastical chicanery in York. The allegory now seems opaque, but to those in the know the satire was clear enough: *A Political Romance*, “which scathingly . . . exposed the rapaciousness of several easily identified members of the Minster clergy, was barely off the press when the archbishop of York hastily intervened to save the blushes of the Church and peremptorily ordered the entire edition to be burned.”

**Charlotte Lennox, Oliver Goldsmith, Sarah Fielding: satire and sentiment**

Lennox, Goldsmith, and Sarah Fielding are names not often associated with satire, but what they do in their major prose works is very much in line with the kinds of satire practiced in the third quarter of the eighteenth century, especially in the social comedies covered in section III. Differences in satiric objects notwithstanding, *The Female Quixote*, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, and *David Simple* are all basically good-natured satires that expose the ill-effects or the folly of excessive sentimentality.

The eponymous protagonist of Lennox’s *The Female Quixote* (1752; 2 vols.; 6s†) is Arabella, raised in isolation by her widowed father and deluded into believing that her cherished romances are fact rather than fiction. Convinced that life follows the heroic code of romance novels, Arabella fancies herself an exalted heroine, and the plot of the novel largely exists to have her make a fool of herself. She misjudges those she meets, and she repeatedly embarrasses Glanville, the cousin who loves her and whom her father wishes her to marry. Her suitor’s “Happiness,” we are told, depends “upon curing her of her romantic Notions”—and in the end this “cure” is effected by an elderly clergyman, who disabuses

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Arabella of her fantasies.\textsuperscript{164} He insists that her romance writers “have instituted a World of their own, and that nothing is more different from a human Being, than Heroes or Heroines,” and her reply is sadly acquiescent but also judgmental: “I am afraid . . . that the Difference is not in Favour of the present World” (380). Having recovered “the free Use of all her noble Powers of Reason,” and having exchanged her romantic pretensions for realistic modesty, she and Glanville unite (382). Arabella is a satiric mouthpiece whose wit reveals the folly of most of the men she meets, and who pointedly criticizes the trivial interests of high society. She is also a target who needs to be satirically educated, as Janet Todd has argued. Arabella “learns humility instead of absurd heroic significance. . . . She is ready to be a wife because she has learned that what romance teaches is false: men do not exist to serve women.”\textsuperscript{165} The satire is not simply a matter of humiliating a few male types (a fop, a pedant), mocking romance conventions, and correcting the clever but misguided heroine. Arabella needs to be brought back in line with a patriarchal society, but Lennox’s endorsement of that society is far from unequivocal.\textsuperscript{166}

\textit{The Vicar of Wakefield} (1766; 2 vols.; 6s†) is in some ways a more difficult case. Whether Goldsmith is producing straight sentimental slush or (lightly) parodying same has been debated. In 1969 Robert H. Hopkins went so far as to argue that Goldsmith belongs to the “tough-minded Augustan tradition” of satire as practiced by Pope and Swift.\textsuperscript{167} \textit{The Vicar of Wakefield}—published two years before \textit{The Good-Natur’d Man} premiered—reveals the folly of overmuch trust in people, chastising the

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\textsuperscript{166} See Deborah Ross, “Mirror, Mirror: The Didactic Dilemma of \textit{The Female Quixote},” \textit{Studies in English Literature} 27 (1987): 455-73; Eric Rothstein, “Woman, Women, and \textit{The Female Quixote},” in Augustan Subjects: Essays in Honor of Martin C. Battestin, ed. Albert J. Rivero (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997), 249-75. In the \textit{ODNB} entry on Lennox, Hugh Amory concludes that, “Though Arabella is ultimately awoken from her dream of romance—by an elderly clergymen, appropriately enough—Lennox has demonstrated just why the romance was so appealing to women living in a thoroughly patriarchal society.”

\textsuperscript{167} Hopkins, \textit{The True Genius of Oliver Goldsmith} (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1969), 27.
decent but credulous country parson, Dr. Primrose, and exposing the depraved ways of the world.\textsuperscript{168} The vicar’s naïveté, vanity, and pride in his daughters leads to a series of disasters, but they sustain their devout optimism and fortune finally smiles on them. The conclusion finds the vicar in a state of reflective contentment: “I had nothing now on this side of the grave to wish for, all my cares were over, my pleasure was unspeakable. It now only remained that my gratitude in good fortune should exceed my former submission in adversity.”\textsuperscript{169}

How satirical a reader finds \textit{The Vicar of Wakefield} depends largely on one’s response to Primrose. He was long hailed as an unambiguously exemplary figure, and Goldsmith’s work viewed as a sentimental parable. Most critics now regard the good parson less as a paragon and more as a well-meant dupe; he is ultimately both culpable in the problems of the novel and a victim of those around him. \textit{The Vicar of Wakefield} can be read either as an endorsement or a parody of sentimentalism, as is true of \textit{The Good-Natur’d Man} and a number of other stage comedies of this quarter century. But, as in those plays, judgment is being rendered, albeit indirectly. As Ricardo Quintana concluded in 1967, simple-minded faith in human goodness becomes a problem: “in the presence of experience,” innocence is foolish, “and in the presence of evil it ceases to be wholly admirable.”\textsuperscript{170} The “satire” in \textit{The Vicar of Wakefield} is both educative and condemnatory: innocence is schooled, and the knaves who take advantage of innocence are exposed as villains.

The satire of Sarah Fielding’s \textit{The Adventures of David Simple} (1744) and its sequel, \textit{Volume the Last} (1753; 2s 6d†), works in much the same way, though Fielding is much darker than Goldsmith. In \textit{David Simple}, the tellingly named ingénue of the title travels to London in search of true friendship. Instead (of course) he finds only false friends, scoundrels whose bad behavior allows Fielding to satirize the hypocrisy and corruption of London life and manners. The novel ends with a double marriage (David

\textsuperscript{168} For some contextual background that helps explain Goldsmith’s view of Dr. Primrose’s moral responsibility, see Eric Rothstein and Howard D. Weinbrot, “The Vicar of Wakefield, Mr. Wilmot, and the ‘Whistonean Controversy’,,” \textit{Philological Quarterly} 55 (1976): 225-40.


and Camilla, his brother Valentine and Cynthia), and *Volume the Last* begins several years later, with this happy family now living in the country, gratefully reveling in health and good fortune. The tone of the sequel is considerably gloomier—and the satire sharper—than that of *David Simple*, though the theme is basically unchanged. The altruistic, tender-hearted David is cruelly deceived by Mr. Ratcliff and Orgueil, who take advantage of his artlessness and manage to cheat him of all his money while pretending to be his benefactors. David and his family bear their sufferings in a spirit worthy of Job, but unlike Goldsmith Fielding does not relieve her hero’s distress by a highly implausible improvement in material fortune. David’s niece dies, and then his brother, and then all but one of his children, his wife, and himself. Like Young Honeywood and Belcourt, David is too good for this world, and Fielding’s indictment of that world is severe. *Volume the Last* closes with a sobering reminder of the benevolent hero’s anguish:

> if any of my Readers chuse to drag *David Simple* from the Grave, to struggle again in this World, and to reflect, every Day, on the Vanity of its utmost Enjoyments, they may use their own Imaginations, and fancy *David Simple* still bustling about on this Earth. But I chuse to think he is escaped from the Possibility of falling into any future Afflictions, and that neither the Malice of his pretended Friends, nor the Sufferings of his real ones, can ever again rend and torment his honest Heart.

Like her brother’s *Amelia*, Fielding’s *Volume the Last* suggests not that virtue does not exist, but that it does not always get its reward. As in *The Female Quixote* and *The Vicar of Wakefield*—and *The Good-Natur’d Man* and other plays—Sarah Fielding’s decent protagonist needs an education in the indecent ways of the world. If the scolding of Young Honeywood seems a bit hard, David’s fate seems an excruciatingly excessive punishment for his simplicity. Sara Gadeken rightly suggests that *David Simple* is more “Horatian” and *Volume the Last* more “Juvenalian,” though Fielding’s condemnation of society is revealed less through direct denunciation than through the affecting account of the victim’s suffering. Gadeken sees this form of satire as definitively “female,” postulating that mid-century female satirists had to “negotiate the difficult course of producing morally forceful satire while avoiding manly vigor,” and that *David Simple* and the sequel show “both the restrictions on female satire and the ways in which Fielding manipulates

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those restrictions.” I have a hard time believing that Sarah Fielding was trying to avoid “manly vigor” in these works. The type of satire practiced in these novels is current at the mid-century among satirists of both sexes. If she is responding to extrinsic pressures in satiric creation, they are not pressures brought because of her gender. I would also point out that Volume the Last is much more vigorous, in satiric terms, than Sarah’s brother’s Tom Jones. In any case, David Simple and Volume the Last, like The Female Quixote, include at least two different kinds of satire. (1) The self-deluded or overly sentimental/credulous hero is a sympathetic or partly sympathetic character who is satirically educated in his or her own folly. (2) The satirist calls into question the social codes against which the protagonist’s ideals are contrasted, as in The Female Quixote or even Sir Launcelot Greaves, or exposes the deplorable ways of the world and the untrustworthiness of most of its inhabitants.

V. Satire for a stable era

Satire is alive and well in the third quarter of the eighteenth century, but if we approach this period wishing for more of Swift and Pope, we can only be disappointed. Of continuity from the previous generation there is very little. Again and again I have insisted on the folly of rigidly narrow definitions: one needs to appreciate what is done at any given time, and a lesson of this book is that satiric practice changes in response to external circumstances. What we find in the mid-century is neither the sudden and near-total disappearance of satire nor an anemic attempt to carry on the traditions of potent “Scriblerian” satire. This chapter’s title is designedly strange—a roll call rather than a conceptual focus—but it is meant to point the reader toward the scrappy, disconnected set of practices the chapter describes.

Satire in the third quarter of the century does not reduce to a single descriptor or explanatory concept, or even to a relatively limited number of groupings such as we have found in previous survey chapters. Churchill, Foote, Macklin, Garrick, Smollett, and Sterne are all prominent satirists of this period, but they have strikingly little in common, and adding Lloyd, Colman, Smart, Sarah Fielding and

others does not simplify the picture. By 1750, satiric practice has become much more fragmented than in the preceding hundred years, and the change does not issue entirely from one cause (e.g., the death of Pope or the rise of sensibility). The marked transformation of satiric poetry has much to do with the increase in self-styled English Poets; a very high percentage of the verse satire is elaborately poeticized, its content often secondary to its form and style. In drama, the changes come in part from the reimposition of censorship, and they also reflect enlarged theatres designed to appeal to a middle-of-the road-audience. Theatre-goers, as Garrick says in the preface to *The Country Girl* (1766), wanted something nice. In drama and fiction, satire is necessarily diluted. *The Adventures of an Atom* is almost entirely satire, but the use of semi-plausible characterization and “realistic” plot in most novels and plays tends to set satire in a context that is not purely satiric.

Satire’s supposed demise has, in common critical imagination, always been linked to the upsurge of finer feelings. Later-eighteenth-century satiric poetry includes little crude lampoonery; playwrights focus as much on reform as on ridicule; and the most famous fictional character is Tristram’s gentle Uncle Toby. More than half a century ago, Northrop Frye published a little piece with a big claim: carefully choosing supporting evidence, and prudently ignoring counterexamples, he labeled the second half of the century the “Age of Sensibility.” Whatever terminology is used—“Augustan” or “Scriblerian” on the one side, “Sensibility” or “Sentimentalism” on the other—the premise has long been that “real” satire gives way to drippy sympathy. We are in the world of *The Good-Natur’d Man* and *The Man of Feeling*, not *Gulliver’s Travels* and *The Dunciad*, and the golden days of satire are over. One problem with this way of thinking is that it tends to invite selective attention: those attempting to describe the age of sensibility are wont to overlook the likes of Foote, Macklin, and Smollett. *The Adventures of an Atom, The Nabob, and The Man of the World*—and, say, the *Epistle to William Hogarth*—are not the

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stuff of affectionate pathos. A more fundamental problem with the satire-to-sentiment story is that Frye’s characterization is, as Weinbrot has decisively demonstrated, nonsensical.

For my purposes, the crucial point is that the changes reflected in later-eighteenth-century satire cannot be explained simply as the unfortunate consequence of softening attitudes toward human nature. Punitive satire does not disappear—see Foote and Smollett, inter alia—but on the whole the techniques and tones of satire change markedly during the eighteenth century. I would not undertake to offer a complete explanation of why this happens, but one major contributory factor is surely the relative stability of the 1750s and 1760s. Jeremy Black explains that, despite the seeming implausibility of describing Wilkesite Britain as “fundamentally stable,” given “the difficulty of forming a lasting ministry and the extent of extra-parliamentary political action,” in fact

the radicalism of the period scarcely prefigured that of the 1790s. All politicians, and the majority of those who thought about politics and society, wished to make the existing system work better . . . rather than to introduce chance. This shared objective did not prevent discord, in part because of the absence of general agreement over several major constitutional issues, but largely because discord was and is compatible with a stable political system.

Black rightly distinguishes between discontent with a monarch and a sense that his rule was illegitimate, underscoring the “broad popular acceptance of the Hanoverian regime” by the 1750s. Whatever the annoyances and discontents to which satirists responded, they were not of the scale or the direness that produced satiric commentary on earlier issues and problems. Satirists respond with anxiety, disgust, and angry conviction to the Exclusion Crisis, King William’s long and expensive war, and the much-reviled Robinocracy—and a surprising amount of the time, they are not just kvetching. They want to make

174 Eighteenth-century attitudes toward laughter, as Simon Dickie has convincingly demonstrated, are by no means unequivocally sentimental. Of mid-eighteenth-century jokes and jestbooks, he concludes, “What is remarkable . . . is their sheer callousness, their frank delight in human suffering. They suggest an almost unquestioned pleasure at the sight of deformity or misery—an automatic and apparently unreflective urge to laugh at weakness simply because it is weak.” While he does not “deny the prominence or force of the sentimental movement,” he does issue a potent reminder that the “emergence of the humanitarian sensibility . . . was a gradual process that was only beginning in the mid-eighteenth century.” See “Hilarity and Pitilessness in the Mid-Eighteenth Century: English Jestbook Humor,” Eighteenth-Century Studies 37 (2003): 1-22, at 2, 18.


something happen. Mid-century satirists are sometimes splenetic, but on the whole they are not fiercely committed to demanding change.

The relative political stability of the 1750s and 1760s, along with Pope’s momentous influence on poetry, powerfully affect the practice of verse satire. With few exceptions, what we find in this material is much less urgency and heat than we have seen before, and a great deal more obvious concern with poetic art. This shift is much easier to identify at the end of a wide-ranging survey of satiric practice across time than it is after reading the canonical heavyweights in relative isolation. If we view the satires of the 1760s by the standards of Swift and Pope, they seem inferior but not generically odd. Viewed in the light of a more comprehensive satiric canon, however, the self-consciously literary satire of the mid-century seems jarringly atypical. Art trumps occasion, and mostly not great art. As poets, the writers of the 1760s are a long way from matching Pope’s technical skill; as satirists they have neither the propitiousness of *Absalom and Achitophel* nor the *saeva indignatio* of the Dean.

After the fall of Walpole plenty of people are unhappy about the particulars of the political situation (the Seven Years’ War was a subject of contention), but few satirists seem viscerally angry or despairing, and neither do they often make a pretense of outrage. Grumpy disapprobation is one thing; violent rejection of the status quo is another. This is the satire of relative quiescence, negligible as *satire* but legitimately reflecting the socio-political conditions in which it was written, and the dispiriting nature of these works does suggest something fundamental about satiric practice. What makes satire so exciting in the eighty years between the Restoration and the fall of Walpole is its writers’ passionate desire to do damage, to effect change, or at least to protest the defeat of their causes—a desire that is almost entirely lacking after 1745. Satire written in the third quarter of the eighteenth century is often witty or instructive or provocative of thought, but the results do tend to seem rather tame. They serve to remind us, however, that great satire usually springs from crisis, or profound discontent, or bitter hostility—and that these were the generative forces that produced the many brilliant satires that make the century between the era of Cromwell and the fall of Walpole the historical acme of this astonishingly varied and multifarious form.
Epilogue:
The Motives for Satire

“Satire can be described as the literary art of diminishing or derogating a subject by making it ridiculous and
evoking toward it attitudes of amusement, contempt, scorn, or indignation. It differs from the comic in that comedy
evokes laughter mainly as an end in itself, while satire derides; that is, it uses laughter as a weapon, and against a butt
that exists outside the work itself.” (M. H. Abrams)¹

This definition is unlikely to evoke surprise from many readers. M. H. Abrams’s Glossary is a widely-
used teaching tool and an authoritative source of conventional wisdom; essentially similar views of satire
can be found in many other reference sources. To anyone who received an Anglo-American university
education in the last sixty years and has been teaching Dryden, Swift, Pope, and company, such a
definition probably seems reasonable. It presumes that satire is a literary art; that it attacks its targets,
with varying degrees of seriousness or intensity; and that the targets are real. These definitional
principles work passably well when applied to some of the eighteenth-century satires most commonly
studied by literary critics. For the vast majority of satires surveyed in chapters 3 through 7, however, they
are largely irrelevant. A huge number of satirists seem less concerned with form and aesthetics than with
content and immediate impact, and “attack” is a crude oversimplification at best, simply wrong for a
substantial number of works. Many of the satires ostensibly concern “real” targets or imaginably connect
to them, but targets vary wildly in type and specificity. “Satire” turns out to be a multifarious
phenomenon which does not reduce to a neat formula. A large part of what makes it so varied stems from
the radically different motives that drive satirists, and to the question of motive we need now to turn.
Satire is an exceptionally purposive form, and motive dictates both subject and audience. What exactly
are satirists attempting to accomplish, and for whom?

One of the more fundamental distinctions to be made in the realm of motive is between satire
written primarily as an aesthetic performance and that chiefly motivated by practical concerns. Satire is

an occasional and circumstantial form, but the difference is whether the “occasion” provides material for a work of art or whether it represents a cause in the service of which a writer can exercise his or her talents. The issue is the primary impetus behind the enterprise, not the “literariness” or unliterariness of the results. I would not deny for a moment that Dryden, Swift, Pope, and Fielding all have enormous literary talent and a considerable degree of literary aspiration, but I suggest that being deeply committed to a cause can inspire a talented writer to an even greater performance. Take *Absalom and Achitophel*. That Dryden’s principal ambition in penning this satire was to craft a lasting work of art seems unlikely to me. He was writing in passionate support of the king in the midst of a dangerous political crisis. He did a brilliant job of turning the biblical characters into present-day politicians, and *Absalom and Achitophel* is the product of inspired genius. The fact remains that what gives it such force is the political occasion and Dryden’s fierce conviction as to what is right. The same could be said of *A Modest Proposal*. Swift’s mounting frustration with the situation in Ireland produced a state of disgust in which he could conceive a devastatingly biting, double-edged satire that that could shock and grip his readers.

Three hundred years on, we can fully relish language, form, and structure, but I suspect that original readers of *Absalom and Achitophel* and *A Modest Proposal* were focused mostly on the issues. Dennis’s take on Dryden’s verse satires is telling. He described *Absalom and Achitophel*, *Mac Flecknoe*, and *The Medall*, along with Garth’s *Dispensary*, as abusive partisan libels, admitting their skill—they “are indeed, if you please, beautiful Libels”—but only as an incidental feature. The modern critical appreciation of literary form and execution is entirely legitimate, but, like most of their contemporary satirists, Dryden and Swift probably wished readers to respond first and foremost to content.

Satire in which the essential point is “the performance” is a different animal. Pope had very little at stake in the social contretemps that inspired *The Rape of the Lock*. It provided him an occasion for an artistic tour de force. Pope wrote with a strong sense that he was a great English writer in a tradition descended from the classics and he shows off his skills with verve. Without denying Swift’s literary skill

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or ambition, I have a hard time imagining—given the intense topicality of most of his output—that he is principally motivated by anything other than purposiveness. He is more a propagandist than a “Scriblerian.” Of course Swift thought of himself as a writer of some importance, but he did not work in settled genres in ways that would proclaim him a distinguished author in a classical tradition à la Pope, and when he boasts of his work he seems proudest of impact. In contrast, though Pope usually has a serious satiric message to convey, he is manifestly concerned with posterity and desirous of readers beyond the occasion for his satire. He is ever conscious of his own artistry, and so are we. This is not common among verse satirists prior to the 1730s, but by the mid-eighteenth century many satiric poets have no very potent cause and seem hyper-conscious of their status as Writers. Determining motive is at best a tricky and uncertain business, but I would argue that the conspicuously conscious artistry of something like The Rape of the Lock or Robert Lloyd’s The Progress of Envy (1751) sets them apart from the satiric verse of Marvell, Ayloffe and Rochester in the late seventeenth century, or Defoe, Tutchin, and Maynwaring in the eighteenth.

Most of the satires covered in this study, serious or not so serious, definitely seem occasional in their central thrust. The nature of the resulting satires, as this survey has demonstrated, is vastly varied. Plenty of satirists write to attack and punish their targets—but “attack” is a very broad category and not an altogether useful one. Satiric attacks are not necessarily motivated by authorial hostility: Shadwell’s caricature of Sir Robert Howard as Sir Positive At-all in The Sullen Lovers (1668) is funny but not particularly damaging. Charles Viscount Mordaunt’s The Ladies’ March (wr. 1681) mocks a string of court women, but his lampoon is essentially just a catalogue of standard charges, probably meant to amuse readers more than to wound the targets. Fielding in Tom Thumb (1730) and Samuel Johnson of Cheshire in Hurlothrumbo (1729) are chirpily deflating the conventions of heroic tragedy; these burlesques are wonderfully entertaining, but they are not serious attempts to do harm. Drubbing easy targets to please a crowd is very different from high-heat denunciation. Ayloffe’s anti-Stuart diatribes are angry rants, not likely to produce change but certainly meant to voice genuine disgust. Fielding’s The Old Debauchees (1732) is the satiric equivalent of preaching to the choir, purveying harshly anti-Catholic
satire for the enjoyment of those already thoroughly hostile to priests and the Catholic Church. Satirists sometimes slash individuals out of sheer malice or for the pleasure of abuse—see Rochester’s bludgeonings of Scroope, or Foote’s hostile caricature of George Whitefield in *The Minor* (1760). Mockery can also be merely a matter of triumphalism, gleeful stomping on a no longer threatening target, as in anti-Shaftesbury satire produced after his departure from London in 1682.

A surprising amount of defamatory satire, however, is propagandistic rather than gratuitously malicious. Butler’s exposure of the radicals in *Hudibras* is a contribution to very current debates about what the official policy toward dissenters should be; Garth’s *Dispensary* is a satiric response to a battle between dispensarians and physicians over the availability of cheaper medicine for lower-class patients. Detraction, in these instances, is emphatically polemical. The same is true of Buckingham’s character assassinations of his rivals (Arlington and Danby), Dryden’s *The Medall* (1682), Swift’s *The Publick Spirit of the Whigs* (1714), and Churchill’s *An Epistle to William Hogarth* (1763)—as well as a considerable number of other works throughout the 120 years at issue. These satires undeniably include ridicule, but they are not wanton derogation. *Clarendon’s Housewarming* (1667) and Swift’s *The Fable of Midas* (1712) have practical points; *On Poet Ninny* (1677) and the Dean’s “elegy” for Marlborough (1722) do not. A number of satires include mockery but are defensive rather than offensive in their essential nature, though satiric defense is not a category to which critics have paid much attention. *The Medall* is more purely antagonistic than is *Absalom and Achitophel*. In *True-Born Englishman* and *The Mock Mourners*, Defoe targets William’s enemies but champions the king he perceives as the Protestant savior of England. Works designed to endorse and support the status quo, however vigorously they denounce its opponents, are fundamentally different from those merely intended to diminish, derogate, or expose the satiric targets.

Other possibilities exist beyond malicious abuse, propaganda, and defense. Satirists often write less to ridicule a target than to vent spleen—see Tutchin’s *Pindarick Ode, in the Praise of Folly* and *Knavery* (1696) and other querulous responses to William and his expensive wars. The same could be said of Gay’s censorious second series of *Fables* (published posthumously in 1738) and Smollett’s
Adventures of an Atom (1769). Some social and political satirists agitate for change (Souterne’s The Wives’ Excuse), while others glumly survey a rotten society (Congreve’s The Way of the World). Satirists are not always trying to accomplish anything beyond provocation or complaint. Some invite audience members to contemplate very real problems if they are so inclined, as in Vanbrugh’s The Relapse (1696) or The Provok’d Wife a year later. Social satire can be toothless entertainment. Something like Ward’s A Walk to Islington (1701) would almost certainly have worked differently for different audiences: those who belong to the world being mocked could enjoy the familiarity of the account without taking serious offense; outsiders are likely to have snickered at satiric depiction of rackety London life. Alternatively, social criticism can be darkly sober, shrill, or heavy-handed, as in Fielding’s Amelia (1751). A Walk to Islington seems designed to please readers, Amelia to provoke and concern them. Any useful system of taxonomy must be polyvalent. In terms of motive, Rochester’s “scepter” lampoon, Ward’s The London Spy, Swift’s responses to Steele, Fielding’s The Historical Register, For the Year 1736, and Churchill’s The Times (for example) have virtually nothing in common.

A remarkable number of satires are primarily positive rather than negative in their apparent agendas. Shadwell and Steele produce heavily didactic plays whose purpose is less to condemn the bad than to uphold the good. In Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones, Fielding affectionately satirizes characters who are essentially decent; Tom is a full-blooded young man capable of folly and imprudence, but he is also a positive model. So is Belcour in Cumberland’s The West Indian (1771), a play that stresses the educability of its tender-hearted scapegrace. In these works, the aim of satiric critique is decidedly not punitive. Authors of distributive justice satire gently correct targets with whom they sympathize, and they assume an audience receptive to instruction by example: readers and viewers can identify with the good-natured but fallible protagonists, and they are invited to apply the lessons to themselves. Defoe is capable of direct denunciation, but he too conceives of satire as an educative business, meant more for the benefit of the audience than for the punishment of the target. Like a number of satirists in the first fifteen years of the eighteenth century, Defoe writes a lot of monitory satire, designed to heighten awareness among readers whom he wants to help. His The Shortest-Way with the Dissenters (1702), Swift’s
Bickerstaff pamphlets of 1708-09, several of Maynwaring’s verse satires, and Arbuthnot’s *The Art of Political Lying* (1712) all—to varying degrees and in different ways—issue warnings of one sort or another, and they tend to make a point about the dangers of credulity. A surprising number of satires in this 120-year period are better defined by what they support than by what they defame. Howard and Buckingham’s *The Country Gentleman* (banned in 1669) includes ridicule of individuals and types, but it also takes a fervently positive pro-Country position in both lifestyle and politics. Marvell goes after Samuel Parker in *The Rehearsal Transpro’sd* (1672), but his principal concern is to defend religious toleration and to defame a prominent opponent of same. This is satiric advocacy rather than condemnation, written for a cause as much as against a variety of targets.

One needs to appreciate just how various this material is, in terms of tone, presentation of positives, and degree of authorial animus. Critics have usually been content to define the aims of satire as either punitive or reformative, but satiric motives differ quite dizzyingly. Table E.1 is an attempt to display some of this heterogeneity.

**Table E.1**  The Many Modes of Satire

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**Harsh Derogation**
- morally outraged (Brome, *The Satyr of Money*; Otway, *Friendship in Fashion*)
- abusive (Cleveland, *The Rebell Scot*; Swift, *The Virtues of Sid Hamet the Magician’s Rod*)
- general political commentary (Macklin, *The Man of the World*)
- specific political commentary (*The Fall of Mortimer*)
- purposive attack on an individual (Buckingham, *Advice to a Paynter*)
- defense of the status quo (Dryden, *Absalom and Achitophel*; Samuel Johnson, *The False Alarm*)

**Mockery and Ridicule**
- triumphalism (*Rump Songs*)
- negative cheerleading (Arbuthnot, *History of John Bull*)
- personal derision (Shadwell, *The Sullen Lovers*)
- mean-spirited entertainment (Pope, the 1728 *Dunciad*; Foote’s personations)

**Preachment**
- moral denunciation (Shadwell, *A True Widow*; Smollett, *Advice*)
- performance of preachment (Churchill, *The Times?*)
- ethical sermonizing (Pope, *Epistles to Several Persons*)

**Entertainment** (little or no authorial animus)
- literary performance (Churchill, *The Ghost*)
- drollery/lightweight social commentary (*Musarum Deliciae*)
comic narrative (Ward, *The Rambling Rakes*)  
burlesque (Carey, *The Dragon of Wantley*, Garrick, *Ragandjaw*)  
humorous presentation of standard butts (Ravenscroft, *The London Cuckolds*)

**Polemic/Ideological Critique**  
political propaganda (Swift, *The Publick Spirit of the Whigs*)  
religio-political argumentation (Defoe, *Jure Divino*)  
social (Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees*)

**Provocation of Thought** (undercutting readers’ or viewers’ confidence in what they know or believe)  
social (Farquhar, *The Beaux Stratagem*)  
epistemological (Rochester, *Upon Nothinge*; Sterne, *Tristram Shandy*)  
philosophical (Prior, *Alma*)  

**Exemplary Satire and Sympathy**  
presentation of an ideal (Steele, *The Conscious Lovers*)  
didactic (Dodsley, *The King and the Miller of Mansfield*)  
affective critique (Fielding, *Joseph Andrews*)  
distributive justice (Fielding, *Tom Jones*; Sheridan, *The School for Scandal*)  
cautionary (Bunyan, *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*)

This list of satiric modes is by no means exhaustive, but it does suggest the range and diversity of possibilities in the realm of motive. Purposive detraction and routine mockery of sitting ducks are disparate enterprises; we need to make distinctions. I must emphasize, however, that this table is not meant to serve as a reliable system of categorization. There are limits to what motive tells us. Many of the works surveyed in this book could be satisfactorily categorized under the headings and sub-headings I have listed here, but a great many satires “do” more than one thing and/or can be taken differently by different readers or viewers. Where does *The Country-Wife* (1675) belong in this grid? Critics have read the play as a harsh satire on violations of socio-moral codes, as a distributive justice satire, as a libertine celebration of Horner, and as mere Cloud Cuckooland entertainment without any moral point at all. What one finds in Wycherley’s satire, and how one labels it, depends very heavily on the assumptions one brings to it.¹ Satirists sometimes write for entirely personal reasons, and the results are unlikely to fit at all well in pigeonholes generated from even a very broad survey—see *The Rape of the Lock* and *Verses on the Death of Dr. S[warth].* Under what heading would *A Tale of a Tub*, *Gulliver’s Travels*, *Trivia*, or

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The Beggar’s Opera fall? Gay’s much-celebrated ballad opera evidently provided simple entertainment for the many people prepared to ignore its cynical message; for those who are not, it might function as a seriously thought-provocative piece of social and political commentary.

Another problem is that similarly motivated works can have quite different effects. “Provocation” more or less captures Rochester’s motive in Upon Nothinge and the Satyre against Reason and Mankind, but it applies just as well to the distinctly cheerful Tristram Shandy. These works (like Defoe’s The Shortest-Way, Mandeville’s The Fable of the Bees, Swift’s The Lady’s Dressing Room, and Hogarth’s Marriage A-la-Mode, to name just a few) need to be distinguished from punitive, judgment-passing satires—but they hardly represent kindred ventures. Emphasizing a single factor in attempting to categorize eighteenth-century satire proves distortive and dangerously reductive in a large number of cases. If we privilege content above all else, then we can imagine that The Tragedy of Tragedies, Peri Bathous, and the last Dunciad somehow go together as high-minded cultural satires in a “Scriblerian” mode, but their strikingly different tones should tell us otherwise. Focusing too much on form leads to the conclusion that The Dispensary is a bridge from Mac Flecknoe to The Rape of the Lock. Favoring motive at the expense of other factors is just as unwise. The Dragon of Wantley (1737) is not really “like” Ragandjaw (privately perf. 1746), and Shadwell’s moralizing A True Widow (1678) has little in common with Smollett’s Juvenalian Advice (1746). How far do we get comparing Upon Nothinge and The Shortest-Way? Both works can be unsettling for some readers, but the one is concerned with epistemological doubt and the other with the veracity (or not) of the high-flyers’ stated attitudes toward dissent. Investigating authorial motive is clearly no panacea in trying to categorize satires, but we do need to realize that satires in these 120 years are variously motivated and often variously executed. The audience being appealed to differs, and so does the nature of the appeal.

Ignoring the variety of motives that underlie satires creates one set of problems; failing to pay serious attention to contextual genesis creates another. For literary scholars of the long eighteenth century, “satire” mostly means Dryden, Swift, and Pope—and other satirists get measured by the distance by which they failed to write Gulliver’s Travels or An Epistle to Arbuthnot. If one plucks out major
canonical works and lays them side by side in glorious isolation, one tends to focus on their commonalities and to emphasize the correspondences among them. Appreciating great works is good, but constructing a history that erases the contexts of these works is not. To assume some kind of organic development from Dryden to Swift to Pope to Fielding (and so on) is an essentially delusory enterprise. How much does *Absalom and Achitophel* actually have to do with *A Tale of a Tub* or *Gulliver’s Travels*, let alone Pope’s Horatian imitations or *The Beggar’s Opera*? Are these works really part of the same venture? Only very broadly and loosely, if that.

One of the major lessons of the survey conducted in chapters 3 through 7 is that the dominant kinds of satire practiced at any point in these 120 years change—and often they do so rapidly and radically. Carolean manuscript lampoons spring from a different world than the printed satires of the 1690s. The reign of Anne is not the reign of George I, let alone that of George II. To pick a work from the early 1680s, another from the early 1700s, and third from the late 1720s and lump them under a single heading is bad historical practice. Their socio-political worlds are just not the same. A certain amount of generalized social satire can be found throughout this period, but for a huge number of works, famous ones included, circumstances are the driving force. Reading and analyzing a lot of satires—and attending to the particular contexts whence they come—makes very clear that there was no such thing as dominant “Augustan mode.”

English satire from 1650 to 1770 is messy, confused, and discontinuous. It comprises a vast amount of material that appears in a variety of genres and sub-genres; it comes in all sizes and shapes. Readers and viewers surely had preferences, but “satire” must have had a wide array of connotations for them. Satirists conceived of satire in very different ways, carrying out their enterprises for any number of reasons and for very different audiences. Eighteenth-century satire is not a matter of a dozen masterpieces that together exemplify a single mode; it is not a distinct literary form that develops apart from the world in which it was produced. Satire, as I have tried to demonstrate, is largely generated by its immediate circumstances, and satiric practice changes with bewildering speed from decade to decade. Cherry-picking sources, treating them in generic and circumstantial isolation, and discovering tidy
connectives between them is never wise, but in satire its results are particularly devastating. Literary critics are fond of asserting that great satire transcends its moment—but satire is by and large a topical form, and the “moment” profoundly influences what satirists produce and why they produce it. Far more than the study of comedy, tragedy, lyric poetry, or fiction, the study of satire demands that we situate ourselves in the historical and generic contexts from which satires spring.
Bibliography

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